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Troop One of the Labrador

By DILLON WALLACE

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ON THE RIGHT SEATHED THE DEVIL'S TEA KETTLE

Troop One of the Labrador

By

DILLON WALLACE

Author of "Grit A-Plenty," "The Ragged Inlet Guards," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

CLYDE FORSYTHE

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To

my little daughter

LEILA ANN

the sunshine of our home

"We care not if the world be wide;
Nor South, nor East, nor golden West
Can match the Northland's rugged pride.
The North, the hardy North's the best!
To the North, to the North we go!
To the North where the pine trees grow!
To the North where the fresh winds blow!
To the North, to the North, Yo ho!"

—John D. Spence.

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I

DOCTOR JOE, SCOUTMASTER

"DOCTOR JOE! Doctor Joe's comin'! He just turned the p'int!"

Jamie Angus burst into the cabin at The Jug breathlessly shouting this joyful news, and then rushed out again with David and Andy at his heels.

"Oh, Doctor Joe! It can't be Doctor Joe, now! Can it, Pop? It must be some one else Jamie sees! It can't be Doctor Joe, *what*ever!" exclaimed Margaret in a great flutter of excitement.

"Jamie's keen at seein'! He'd know anybody as far as he can see un!" assured Thomas, no less excited at the news than was Margaret. "But 'tis strange that he's comin' back so soon!"

Of course Margaret, who was laying the table for supper, must needs follow the boys and Thomas, who was leaning over the wash basin removing the grime of the day's toil, snatched the towel from its peg behind the door and, drying his hands as he ran, sacrificing dignity to haste, followed Margaret, who had joined the three boys at the end of the jetty which served as a boat landing.

A skiff had just entered the narrow channel which connected The Jug, as the bight where the Anguses lived was called, with the wider waters of Eskimo Bay. There could be no doubt, even at that distance, that the tall man standing aft and manipulating the long skulling oar, was Doctor Joe. As the little group gathered on the jetty he took off his hat and waved it high above his head. It was Doctor Joe beyond a doubt! The boys waved their caps and shouted at the top of their lusty young lungs, Margaret, undoing her apron, waved it and added her voice to the chorus, and Thomas, quite carried away by the excitement, waved the towel and in a great bellowing voice shouted a louder welcome than any of them.

There was no happier or better contented family on all The Labrador than the family of Thomas Angus, though they had their trials and ups and downs and worries like any other family in or out of Labrador.

"Everybody must expect a bit o' trouble and worry now and again," Thomas would say when things did not go as they should. "If we never had un, and livin' were always fine and clear, we'd forget to be thankful for our blessin's. We has t' have a share o' trouble in our lives, and here and there a hard knock whatever, t' know how fine the good things are and rightly enjoy un when they come. And in the end troubles never turn out as bad as we're expectin', by half. First and last

IT WAS A FIGHT TO THE DEATH

there's a wonderful sight more good times than bad uns for all of us."

Thomas had reason to be proud and thankful. Jamie could see as well as ever he could, and it was all because of Doctor Joe and his wonderful operation on Jamie's eyes when it seemed certain the lad was to become blind. Through the skill of Doctor Joe, Jamie's eyes were every whit as keen as David's and Andy's, and there were no keener eyes in the Bay than theirs.

David was now nearly seventeen and Andy was fifteen—brawny, broad-shouldered lads who had already faced more hardships and had more adventures to their credit than fall to many a man in a whole lifetime. In that brave land adventures are to be found at every turn. They bob up unexpectedly, and the man or boy who meets them successfully must know the ways of the wilderness and must be self-reliant and resourceful, must have grit a-plenty and a stout heart.

Margaret kept house for the little family, a responsibility that had been thrust upon her, and which she cheerfully accepted, when her mother was laid to rest and she was a wee lass of twelve. Now she was eighteen and as tidy and cheerful a little housekeeper as could be found on the coast, and as pretty too, in manner as well as in feature. "'Tis the manner that counts," said Thomas, and he declared that there was "no prettier lass to be found on the whole Labrador."

Doctor Joe, whose real name was Joseph Carver, was their nearest neighbour at Break Cove, ten miles down Eskimo Bay. He had come to the coast nine years before, a mysterious stranger, nervous and broken in health. Thomas gave him shelter at The Jug, helped him build his cabin at Break Cove and taught him the ways of the land and how to set his traps. Doctor Joe became a trapper like his neighbours, and in time, with wholesome living in the out-of-doors, regained his health and came to love his adopted country and its rugged life.

No one knew then that Joseph Carver was indeed a doctor, but he was so handy with bandages and medicines that the folk of the Bay recognized his skill and soon fell, by common consent, to calling him "Doctor Joe."

It was a year before our story begins that Jamie had first complained of a mist in his eyes. With passing weeks the mist thickened, and one day Doctor Joe examined the eyes and announced that only a delicate and serious operation could save the lad's sight. This demanded that Jamie be taken to a hospital in New York where a specialist might operate. It was an expensive undertaking. Neither Thomas nor Doctor Joe had the necessary money, but Thomas hoped to realize enough from his winter's trapping in the interior and Doctor Joe was to add the proceeds of his own winter's work to the fund. Then Thomas broke his leg. Doctor

Joe must needs remain at The Jug to care for him, and there seemed no hope for Jamie but a life of darkness.

But David was confident that he could take his father's place on the trails, and with some persuasion, for the need was desperate, Thomas consented that David and Andy should spend the winter in the great interior wilderness with no other companion than Indian Jake, a half-breed.

That was an experience worthy the stoutest heart. Through long dreary months they faced the sub-arctic cold and fearful blizzards that swept the wilderness, following silent trails over wide white wastes or through the depths of dark forests, and falling upon many a wild adventure that tried their mettle a hundred times. It was a man's job, but they both made good, and that is something to be proud of—to make good at the job you tackle.

Jamie had grit too, but grit alone could not save his eyes. The mist thickened more rapidly than Doctor Joe had expected it would, and there came a time when Jamie could scarcely see at all. Then it was that Doctor Joe announced one day before the return of David and Andy from the trails, that the operation could be no longer delayed if Jamie's eyesight was to be saved, and that to attempt to delay it until the ice cleared from the coast and the mail boat came to bear him away to New York would be fatal.

After making this announcement, Doctor Joe revealed the fact that he had once been a great eye surgeon. With Thomas's consent he offered to perform the operation on Jamie's eyes. Thomas had unbounded faith in his friend. Doctor Joe operated and Jamie's sight was saved.

In curing Jamie, Doctor Joe discovered that he himself was cured, and that he was again in possession of all his former skill. It was quite natural, therefore, that he should wish to resume the practice of surgery. He was an indifferent trapper, and the living that he made following the trails amounted to a bare existence. He decided, therefore, that it was his duty to himself to return to the work for which, in long years of study, he had been trained.

Six weeks before Doctor Joe had sailed away on the mail boat from Fort Pelican, bound for New York, that far distant, mysterious, wonderful city of which he had told so many marvellous tales. Thomas had grave doubts that they would ever see him again, though he had said that he would some day return to visit his friends at The Jug and to see his own little deserted cabin at Break Cove, where he had spent so many lonely but withal profitable years, for it was here that he regenerated and rebuilt his broken health. He had good reason to love the place and he was quite sure he had no better or truer friends in all the world than Thomas Angus and his family.

"Thomas," said he at parting, "if I had the means to support myself I would stay here on The Labrador and be doctor to the people that need me, for there are folk enough that need a doctor's help up and down the coast. But I'm a poor man, and if I stopped here I'd have to make my living as a trapper, and you know how poor a trapper I've been all these years. Back in New York I can do much good, and there I can live as I was reared to live. But I'll not forget you, Thomas, and some day I'll come to see you."

"I'm not doubtin' 'tis best you go and the Lard's will," said Thomas. "But we'll be missin' you sore, Doctor Joe. I scarce knows how we'll make out without you. 'Twill seem strange—almost like you were dead, I'm fearin'."

"Thomas," and Doctor Joe's voice trembled with emotion, "there's no one in the wide world nearer my affections than you and the boys and Margaret. It hurts me to go, but it's best I should. I might scratch along here for a few years, but I was not born to the work and the time would come when I'd be a burden on some one, and it would make me unhappy. I know that I'll wish often enough to be back here with you at The Jug."

"You'd never be a burden, *what*ever!" Thomas declared, quite shocked at the suggestion. "I feels beholden to you, Doctor Joe. There's nary a thing I could ever do to make up to you for savin' Jamie's eyes. You made un as good as new.

He'd ha' been stone blind now if 'tweren't for you —and the mercy o' God."

"The mercy of God," Doctor Joe repeated reverently.

And here at the end of six weeks was Doctor Joe back again! What wonder that Thomas Angus and his family were quite beside themselves with joy, shouting themselves hoarse down there on the jetty.

And presently, when the skiff drew alongside, and Doctor Joe stepped out upon the jetty, he was quite overwhelmed with the welcome he received.

"Well, Thomas," he said as they walked up to the cabin with Jamie clinging to one of his hands and Andy to the other, "here I am back again, as you see. I couldn't stay away from you dear, good people. I may as well confess, I was homesick for you before I reached New York, and I'm back to stay. I found my fortune had been made while I was here, and now I can do as I please."

"Oh, that's fine now!" exclaimed Margaret. "'Tis fine if you're to stay!"

"We were missin' you sore," said Thomas. "'Tis like the Lard's blessin' to have you back at The Jug!"

"And there's good old Roaring Brook!" Doctor Joe stopped for a moment, with half closed eyes, to listen to the rush of water over the rocks, where Roaring Brook tumbled down into The Jug. "It's the sweetest music I've heard since I left

here! And the smell of the spruce trees! And such a scene! Thomas, my friend, it's a rugged land where we live, but it's God's own land, just as He made it, beautiful, and undefiled by man!"

Doctor Joe turned about and stretched his right arm toward the south. Before them lay the shimmering placid waters of The Jug, reaching away to join the wider, greater waters of Eskimo Bay. In the distance, beyond the Bay, the snow-capped peaks of the Mealy Mountains stood in silent majesty, now reflecting the last brilliant rays of the setting sun. As they tarried, watching them, the light faded and shafts of orange and red rose out of the west. The waters became a throbbing expanse of colour, and the woods on the Point, at the entrance to The Jug, sank into purple.

"'Tis a bit of the light of heaven that the Lard lets out of evenin's for us to see," said Jamie, and perhaps Jamie was right.

"You must be rare hungry, now," observed Thomas, as they entered the cabin. "Margaret were just puttin' supper on when Jamie sights you turnin' the P'int. 'Twill be ready in a jiffy."

"What have you got for us, Margaret?" asked Doctor Joe. "I believe I am hungry for the good things you cook."

"Fried trout, sir," said Margaret.

"Fried trout!" Doctor Joe rolled his eyes in mock ecstasy. "It couldn't have been better!"

"You always says that, whatever," laughed

Margaret. "If 'twere just bread and tea I'm thinkin' you'd like un fine."

"But trout!" exclaimed Doctor Joe. "Fresh trout are worth five dollars a pound where I've been—and couldn't be had for that!"

"Well, now!" said Margaret in astonishment. "And we has un so plentiful!"

David lighted a lamp and Thomas renewed the fire, which crackled cheerily in the big box stove, while everybody talked excitedly and Margaret set on the table a big dish of smoking fried trout, a heaping plate of bread, and poured the tea.

"Set in! Set in, Doctor Joe!" Thomas invited.

And when they drew up to the table, with Thomas at one end and Margaret at the other, and Doctor Joe and Jamie at Thomas's right, and David and Andy at his left, Thomas devoutly gave thanks for the return of their friend and asked a blessing upon the bounty provided.

"Help yourself, now, and don't be afraid of un," Thomas admonished, passing the dish of trout to Doctor Joe.

"A real banquet," Doctor Joe declared, as he helped himself liberally. "I've eaten in some fine places since I've been away, but I've had no such feast as this! And there's no one in the whole world can fry trout like Margaret!"

"You always says that, sir," and Margaret's face glowed with pleasure at the compliment.

"'Tis true!" declared Doctor Joe. "'Tis true!"

"I'm wonderin' now about the trout," remarked David.

"What you wondering?" asked Doctor Joe.

"How folks get along with no trout to eat off where you've been, sir."

"There are men who go far out from the city and fish in the streams for trout, just for the sport of catching them," explained Doctor Joe. "They will tramp all day along brooks, and feel lucky if they catch a dozen little fellows so small we'd not look at them here. But it is only the few who do it for sport that ever get any at all, and there are hundreds of people there who never even saw a trout, they catch so very few of them."

"'Twould seem like a waste o' time," remarked Thomas, "if they catches so few. I'd never walk all day for a dozen trout unless I was wonderful hard up for grub. If I were wantin' fish so bad I'd set a net for whitefish or salmon, or if there were cod grounds about I'd gig for cod, though salmon or cod or whitefish would never be takin' the place o' good fresh trout with me."

"It's not altogether for the trout the sportsmen tramp the streams all day," laughed Doctor Joe. "They prize the trout they get as a great delicacy, to be sure, but it's the joy of getting out into the open that pays them for the effort. I've done it myself. They get plenty of sea fish, they buy them at the shops."

"I never were thinkin' o' that," said Thomas.

"I'm thinkin', now, that's where all the salmon we salts down and sells to the Post goes."

The boys were vastly interested, and asked many questions, which Doctor Joe answered with infinite patience, concerning the various kinds of fish people bought in the shops, and how the fish were caught and shipped to the shops to be sold fresh.

"And you'll stay now? You'll not be leavin' The Labrador again?" asked Thomas, after supper.

"Aye," said Doctor Joe, "I've elected to be a Labradorman." Then, turning to the boys, he suggested: "Lads, there are a lot of things in that skiff of mine. I wish you'd bring them in. Will you do it while your father and I visit?"

The boys were not only glad but eager to do it, for there were doubtless many surprises for themselves in the skiff, and with one accord the three hurried out.

"Years ago, Thomas," said Doctor Joe, when the boys were gone, "in my prosperous days in New York I invested a little money in a mining property. Shortly after I made the investment it was said the ore had run out, and I believed my money was lost. When I returned to New York this summer I found that more ore had been found later, and the mine had earned me a lot of money. I invested what was due me in such a way that it will bring me an income each year sufficient to provide me with all I shall ever need."

"Oh, but that's fine now!" said Thomas.

"Thomas," Doctor Joe continued, "I would not have been able to enjoy this had it not been for your kindness to me years ago, when I came first to The Labrador a man of broken health. If you had not offered me your friendship then I would have died an invalid in poverty.

"I've thought of this a thousand times. I believe God sent me here. I only knew then that I came because I sought a secluded spot on the earth where I could find relief from turmoil. Now, I believe He guided me to The Labrador and to The Jug to you. He had something for me to do in the world, and this was His way of saving me.

"When Jamie needed me I was here, and because you had befriended me I was prepared with God's help and with my skill and training to restore Jamie's eyesight. There are others on the coast who need a doctor's skill just as Jamie needed it, and they have no one to help them. I have decided that I shall be doctor to the people. If I can help the folk, as I am sure I can, I'll be happy in the knowledge that I'm making some little return for the great deal that you have done for me."

"I were never doin' much for you, Doctor Joe—just what one man would always do for another," Thomas protested. "But 'twill be a blessin' to the folk of The Labrador to have you doctor un! We all need doctors often enough when there's none to be had, and folks die for the need of un."

"Yes, folks die here for the need of a doctor," Doctor Joe agreed, "and I hope I may be the means of saving lives and giving relief."

The three boys broke in upon them with their arms full of packages.

"They's a lot more!" exclaimed Jamie, depositing his load upon the floor.

"Perhaps we had better help them, Thomas," suggested Doctor Joe, rising.

"Oh, no, sir," Jamie protested. "Let us bring un up!"

And so said David and Andy also, and they quickly had the contents of the skiff transferred to the cabin, and the exciting process of opening the packages began.

The first to be opened was for Margaret, and it contained many pretty and useful things, including two neat, substantial warm dresses, finer than any Margaret had ever before possessed or seen. Her eyes sparkled as she held them up for inspection, and she exclaimed over and over again:

"Oh, how wonderful pretty they is!"

For the boys there were innumerable gifts, dear to boys' hearts, including a compass and a watch for each. For Thomas there was a fine pair of field-glasses, a compass and a very fine watch indeed, and he was as pleased and happy as the others.

"The glasses'll be a wonderful help t' me in

huntin','' he declared. "When I climbs hills for a look around I can see deer that I'd sure to be missin' with no glasses. I'm not doubtin' the compass'll come in handy now and again in thick weather."

Then there was a big box of goodies. There were such candies as they had never dreamed of—oranges and big red-cheeked apples. Even Thomas had never before in his life tasted an orange or an apple, and they all declared that they had never imagined that anything could be so good. It was quite astonishing to learn that in the great world from which Doctor Joe had come there were people who ate oranges and apples every day of their lives if they wished them.

"'Tis strange the way the Lard fixes things," observed Thomas. "Here now we never saw the like of oranges and apples before in all our lives, but we has plenty of trout, and there are folks out there that has no trout but they all has oranges and apples. We has so many trout we forgets how fine they is, and what a blessin' 'tis we has un. And I'm thinkin' 'tis the same with them folks about the oranges and apples."

"Yes," agreed Doctor Joe, "it's only when things are taken away from us that we really appreciate them. Jamie, no doubt, appreciates his eyes much more than he would have done had the mist never clouded them."

"Aye, 'tis so," said Thomas.

"I dare say," Doctor Joe suggested, "that you've never eaten potatoes or onions?"

"No," said Thomas, "I've heard of un but I never eats un. I never had any to eat."

"Well," announced Doctor Joe, "I've had several sacks of potatoes and a sack of onions and two barrels of apples shipped to Fort Pelican with a quantity of other goods. We'll have to go with the big boat for them."

The boys and Margaret were quite beside themselves with the wonder of it all, and Thomas was little less excited.

"We'll go for un to-morrow or the next day whatever," said Thomas.

There was one box still unopened, and the three boys were eyeing it expectantly, when Doctor Joe exclaimed:

"Here we've left till the last the most important thing of all. Get an ax, David, and we'll knock the cover off this box."

David had the ax in a jiffy, and when Doctor Joe removed the cover the box was found to be filled with books.

"O-h-h!" breathed the boys in unison.

"'Tis fine! Oh, I've been wishin' and wishin' for books t' look at and read!" exclaimed Margaret.

Doctor Joe had taught them all to read and write in the years he had been with them, an accomplishment that not every boy and girl on The

Labrador possessed, for there were no schools there.

"There are some books to study and some to read. There are story books and books about birds and flowers and animals. And here is something that I know will please the boys," said Doctor Joe, drawing from the box six paper-bound volumes. "There's an interesting story attached to these books that I must tell you before you look at them, and then we'll go through them together.

"One day I was walking in a park in New York.

"Suddenly I heard a crashing noise, and I hurried in the direction in which I heard the noise, and turning a corner saw an automobile lying on its side. Some boys wearing khaki-coloured uniforms, very much like soldiers' uniforms, had already reached the wreck, and before I came up with them had rescued two injured men. I never saw more efficient or prompt service than those boys were giving the poor men, who were both badly hurt. They had the men stretched out upon the grass. One had a severed artery in his arm, where the arm had been cut upon the broken glass wind shield of the automobile. The man's blood was pouring in great spurts through the wound, but the boys were already adjusting a tourniquet, for which they used a handkerchief, and in a minute they had the bleeding stopped, as well as I could have done it. I've no doubt they saved the

man's life, for without prompt help he'd have bled to death in a short time.

"The other man was cut and bruised, and the boys were making him as comfortable as possible until an ambulance came to take him to a hospital. There was really nothing I could do that the boys had not already done promptly and remarkably well.

"The instant they had discovered the accident two boys had run away to summon an ambulance and to notify the police, and in a little while an ambulance with a surgeon and two policemen came and took the men away.

"The boys were only about Andy's age, and I wondered at their training and efficiency. When the ambulance had gone with the injured men I walked a little way with the boys, and learned that they belonged to a wonderful organization called 'Boy Scouts.' I had heard of Boy Scouts, but I supposed it was one of the ordinary clubs where boys got together just for play.

"I was so much interested that I looked up the head office of the Boy Scouts, and asked questions about them. Then I bought these copies of the Boy Scout's Handbook. They tell about the things the scouts do, and how a boy may become a scout. I knew you chaps would be so interested you would each want a book, so I bought a half-dozen copies. The extra books we can give to other boys up the Bay."

"Could we be scouts?" asked Andy, breathlessly.

"Yes, to be sure!" Doctor Joe smiled.

"'Twould be rare fun, now!" exclaimed David.

"All of us scouts, just like the boys in New York?" Jamie asked, his face aglow.

"Yes," answered Doctor Joe. "I knew you chaps would like to be scouts. We'll organize a troop, and we'll call it Troop One of The Labrador. There are Boy Scouts of America, and Boy Scouts of England, and Boy Scouts of nearly every country in the world except The Labrador. We'll be the Boy Scouts of The Labrador, and become a part of the great army of scouts. It'll be something to be proud of."

"How'll we do it?" asked David.

"I'll be leader, or scoutmaster as they call the leader," explained Doctor Joe. "These books explain all about the things we're to do.

"Before you become tenderfoot scouts you'll have to learn some things," Doctor Joe continued, after looking through one of the Handbooks, until he found the proper page. "You can tie all the knots already. You do that every day. But there are plenty of boys, and men too, where I came from that can't even tie the ordinary square knot.

"You'll have to learn the oath and law. You live pretty close to the requirements of the law now, but it'll be necessary to learn it, and I'll explain then what each law means. You'll have to

learn what the scout badge stands for and how it's made up, and other things."

Doctor Joe carefully marked the necessary pages and references.

"Now about the flag," said Doctor Joe. "You'll have to learn about the formation of the flag and what it stands for. This book is for the Boy Scouts of America, and the flag it refers to is the United States flag. I'm an American, but you chaps are living in British territory and you're British subjects, so you'll have to learn about the British flag or Union Jack, as it's called, for that's your flag.

"The Union Jack is the national flag of the whole British Empire. The English flag was originally a red cross on a white field. This is called the flag of St. George. In the year 1606, three hundred years ago, King James the First added to it the banner of Scotland, which was a blue flag with a white cross, called St. Andrew's Cross, lying upon the blue from corner to corner—that is diagonally."

Doctor Joe opened his travelling bag and drew forth two small flags, one the Stars and Stripes and the other the British Union Jack.

"I nearly forgot about these," said he, spreading the flags upon the table. "This is the flag of my country," and he caressed the United States flag affectionately. "I love it as you should love your flag. The Union Jack is the emblem of the great

British Empire, of which you are a part. It is one of the greatest and best countries in the world to live in. To be a British subject is something to be proud of indeed."

"Aye," broke in Thomas, "'tis that, now."

"Yes," continued Doctor Joe, "I want you to be as proud of it as I am that I'm a citizen of the United States, and I'm so proud of it I wouldn't change for any other country in the world. When I reached St. Johns and saw the American flag flying over the office of the United States Consulate, my eyes filled with tears. I hadn't seen that old flag for years, and I stood in the street for an hour doing nothing but look at it and think of all it represents. It makes my blood tingle just to touch it. You chaps must feel the same toward the British flag, for that's your flag.

"Now let me show you how the flag is made up," and Doctor Joe proceeded to trace St. George's Cross and St. Andrew's Cross, explaining them again as he did so. "In the year 1801 another banner was added. This was the Banner of St. Patrick of Ireland. St. Patrick's Cross was a red diagonal cross on a white field, and here you see it."

Doctor Joe traced it on the flag.

"There," he went on, "you have the British flag complete. No one knows exactly why it is called the 'Jack,' but it may have been because in the old days, the English knights, when they went

out to fight their battles, wore a jacket over their armour with the St. George's Cross upon it, so it would be known to what nation they belonged. This jacket was sometimes called a 'jack' for short.

"The Union Jack did not become a complete flag as we have it to-day until the year 1801, when St. Patrick's Cross was added to it. The Stars and Stripes, the flag of my country, was first made in 1776, and on June 14, 1777, it was adopted by the United States Congress as the national emblem, so you see it is even older than the British flag. The flags of all nations in the world have changed since 1777 excepting only the United States flag, and every American is proud of the fact that his flag is older than the flag of any other Christian nation in the world."

The boys, and Thomas and Margaret also, were fascinated with Doctor Joe's brief story of the flags. They were quite excited with the thought that they were to be a part of the great army of Boy Scouts, and to do the same things that other boys in far-away lands were doing, and the other boys that they had never seen seemed suddenly very much nearer to them and more like themselves than they had ever seemed before.

The three buried their noses in the Handbook, now and again asking Doctor Joe questions. They were so excited and so interested, indeed, that they could scarcely lay the books aside when Thomas

announced that it was time to " turn in," and Andy declared he could hardly wait for morning when they could be at them again.

And so it came about that Troop 1, Boy Scouts of The Labrador, was organized, and in the nature of things the troop was destined to meet many adventures and unusual experiences.

II

PLANS

THE cabin at The Jug had three rooms. There was a square living-room, entered through an enclosed porch on its western grade. At the end of the living-room opposite the entrance were two doors, one leading to Margaret's room, the other to the room occupied by the boys. Thomas himself slept in a bunk, resembling a ship's bunk, built against the north wall.

The furnishings of the living-room consisted of a home-made table, a big box stove, three home-made chairs and some chests, which served the double purpose of storage places for clothing and seats. A dish closet was built against the wall at the left of the entrance, and between two windows on the south side of the room, which looked out upon The Jug, was a shelf upon which Thomas kept his Bible and Margaret her sewing basket—a little basket which she had woven herself from native grasses. Behind the stove was a bench, upon which stood a bucket of water and the family wash basin, and over the basin hung a towel for general family use.

Pasted upon the walls were cuts from old newspapers and magazines. There were no other decorations than these cuts and snowy muslin curtains at the windows, but the floor, table, chairs—all the woodwork, indeed—were scoured to immaculate whiteness with sand and soap, and everything was spotlessly clean and tidy, and despite the austere simplicity of the room and its furnishings it possessed an indescribable atmosphere of cozy comfort.

Doctor Joe's bed was spread upon the floor. It was still candle-light when he was awakened by Thomas building a fire in the stove, for in this land of stern living there is no lolling in bed of mornings.

"Good-morning, Thomas," Doctor Joe greeted with a yawn and a stretch as he sat up.

"Marnin'," said Thomas.

"How's the morning, Thomas, fair for our trip to Fort Pelican?"

"Aye, 'tis a fine marnin'," announced Thomas, "but I were thinkin' 'twould be better to wait over till to-morrow for the trip. After your long voyage 'twould be a bit trying for you to turn back to-day to Fort Pelican without restin' up, and I'm not doubtin' a day whatever'll do no harm to the potaters and things."

"I believe you're right, Thomas," and Doctor Joe spoke with evident relief. "I thought you'd be getting ready for the trapping and would like to

get the Fort Pelican trip out of the way. We'll put the trip off till to-morrow."

Doctor Joe dressed hurriedly, and went out to enjoy the cool, crisp morning. Everything was white with hoarfrost. The air was charged with the perfume of balsam and spruce and other sweet odours of the forest. Doctor Joe took long, deep, delicious breaths as he looked about him at the familiar scene.

The last stars were fading in the growing light. A low mist hung over The Jug, and beyond the haze lay the dark, heaving waters of Eskimo Bay. In the distance beyond the Bay the high peaks of the Mealy Mountains rose out of the gloom, white with snow and looming above the dark forest at their base in cold and silent majesty. Behind the cabin stretched the vast, mysterious, unbounded wilderness which held, hidden in its unmeasured depths, rivers and lakes and mountains that no man, save the wandering Indian, had ever looked upon—great solitudes whose silence had remained unbroken through the ages.

"If some of those Boy Scouts could only see this!" exclaimed Doctor Joe.

"'Twere fashioned by the Almighty for comfortable livin'," said Thomas, who had called Margaret and the boys and come out unobserved by Doctor Joe. "The's no better shelter on the coast, and no better place for seals and salmon, with neighbours handy when we wants to see un, and

plenty o' room to stretch. 'Tis the finest *I* ever saw, whatever."

"Yes, 'tis all of that," agreed Doctor Joe. "But I wasn't thinking now of The Jug alone. I was thinking of the majestic grandeur of the whole scene. I was enjoying the freedom from the noise and scramble, the dirt and smoke and smudge of the city, with its piles upon piles of ugly buildings, and never a breath of such pure air as this to be breathed. I was thinking of these fine young chaps, the Boy Scouts I saw there, who are trying to study God's big out-of-doors and must content themselves with stingy little parks. It's the love of nature that takes them to the parks, and compared with this they have a poor substitute. This is the world as God made it, with all its primordial beauty. We're fortunate that circumstances placed us here, Thomas, and we should be forever thankful."

"I'm wonderin' now," observed Thomas, as he and Doctor Joe paced up and down the gravelly beach, "why folks ever lives in such places as you tells about. The's plenty o' room down here on The Labrador, and plenty o' other places, I'm not doubtin', where they'd be free from the crowds and dirt, and have plenty o' room to stretch, and live fine like we lives."

"We're a thousand miles from a railroad," said Doctor Joe. "Most of the people in the cities wouldn't live a thousand paces from a railroad if

they could help themselves. They take a car and ride if they've only half a mile to go. They ride so much they've almost forgotten how to walk. They like crowds. They'd be lonesome if they were away from them."

"'Tis strange, wonderful strange, how some folks lives," remarked Thomas, quite astonished that any could prefer the city to his own big, free Labrador. "When folks has enough to keep un busy they never gets lonesome, and bein' idle is like wastin' a part of life. A man could never be lonesome where there's plenty o' water and woods about. I always finds jobs a-plenty to turn my hand to, and I has no time to feel lonesome. And I never could live where I didn't have room enough to stretch, *what*ever."

"That's it!" Doctor Joe spoke decisively. "Room enough to stretch mind as well as body. Why, Thomas, I've often heard men say that they had to 'kill time,' and didn't know what to do with themselves for hours together!"

"'Tis wicked and against the Lard's will," and Thomas shook his head. "The Lard never wants folks to be idle or kill time. He fixes it so there's a-plenty of useful things for everybody to do all the time, and they wants to do un."

"'Tis the measure of a man's worth," remarked Doctor Joe. "The worth while man never has an hour to kill. The day hasn't hours enough for him. It's the other kind that kill time—the sort

that are not, and never will be, of much account in the world."

They walked a little in silence, each busy with his own thoughts, when Thomas remarked:

"The Lard has been wonderful good to me, Doctor Joe, givin' me three as fine lads and as fine a lass as He ever gave a man. Then He saves the little lad's eyes, when they were goin' blind, by sendin' you to cure un. And when I were breakin' my leg and couldn't work He sends along Indian Jake to go to the trails to hunt with David and Andy, and they makes a fine hunt and keeps us out o' debt. And this summer we has as fine a catch of salmon as ever we has, and we're through with un a fortnight ahead of ever before, with all the barrels filled and the gear stowed, and the salt salmon traded in at the Post, and plenty o' flour and pork and molasses and tea t' see us through the winter, *what*ever."

"Last year at this time things looked pretty blue for us," said Doctor Joe, "but everything worked out well in the end, Thomas."

"Aye," agreed Thomas, "wonderful well. I'm thinkin' that if we does our best t' help ourselves when troubles come the Lard is like t' step in and give us a hand. He wants us to do the best we can t' help ourselves and when He sees we're doin' it He lifts the troubles."

"That's true," agreed Doctor Joe, "and if a man takes advantage of every opportunity that

comes to him, and don't waste his time, he's pretty sure to succeed."

"Aye, that he is," said Thomas. "Now I were thinkin' that the lads worked so wonderful hard at the salmon th' summer, I'd let un go with you to Fort Pelican t' manage the boat, and I'll be staying home to make ready for the trail. The's a-plenty to be done yet to make ready without hurry, and a trip to Fort Pelican will be a rare treat for the lads. But I'll go if you wants. I were just askin' if 'twould be suitin' you if I stays home and lets they go?"

"Why, of course! That's great! Simply great!" exclaimed Doctor Joe. "The boys will make a fine crew! Will Jamie go too?"

"Aye, Jamie's been workin' like a man, and he'll be keen for the trip," said Thomas. "And last night I were thinkin' after I goes to bed how fine 'tis that you're to be doctor to the coast. Indian Jake's to be my trappin' pardner th' winter, and the lads'll 'bide home. You'll be needin' dogs and komatik (sledge) to take you about. There'll be little enough for the dogs to do, and you'll be welcome to un. The lads can do the drivin' for you and whatever you wants un to do. Use un all you needs. I wants to do my share to help you do the doctorin'."

"Thank you! Thank you, Thomas!" Doctor Joe accepted gratefully. "This will make it possible for me to see a good many people that I other-

wise would not be able to see, and make it easier for me also."

"Aye," said Thomas, "I were thinkin' that too, and the lads will be glad enough to lend you a hand when you needs un."

It was broad daylight. While Thomas and Doctor Joe talked on the beach, the boys had been busily engaged in carrying the day's supply of water from Roaring Brook to a water barrel in the porch. Now Jamie appeared to announce breakfast. While they ate the boys were able to talk of little else than the scout books, and the fact they were to do as boys did in other parts of the world. And they were delighted beyond measure when they learned that they were to make the voyage to Fort Pelican with Doctor Joe. It was an event of vast importance.

"There'll be plenty o' time in the boat to study the scout book things," Andy suggested. "Maybe now we could learn to be scouts before we gets back home."

"I've no doubt you can pass all the tenderfoot tests while we're away," said Doctor Joe. "And since you're to take me about with dogs and komatik this winter when I go to visit sick people, there'll be no end of chances to show what good scouts you are."

"To take you about?" asked Andy excitedly.

Then Thomas must needs explain that they must do their share in looking after the sick folk, and

that David and Andy were to be Doctor Joe's dog drivers when winter came.

"'Twill be fine to manage the dogs for you, sir!" exclaimed David, turning to Doctor Joe.

"Wonderful fine!" echoed Andy.

"And will you be goin' outside the Bay?" asked David.

"Aye, outside the Bay and in it, wherever there's need to go," said Doctor Joe.

"'Twill be tryin' and hard work sometimes," suggested Thomas, "travellin' when the weather's nasty, but I'm not doubtin' the lads'll be able t' manage un."

"We'll manage un!" David declared with pride in the confidence placed in him and Andy.

To drive dogs on these sub-arctic trails in fair weather and foul calls for courage and grit, and the lads felt justly proud of the responsibility that had been laid upon them. There would be many a shift to make on the ice, they knew. There would be blinding blizzards and withering arctic winds to face, and no end of hard work. But these lads of The Labrador loved to stand upon their feet like men and face and conquer the elements like hardy men of courage. This is the way of boys the world over—eager for the time when they may assume the responsibility of manhood. Such a time comes earlier to the lads of The Labrador than with us. In that stern land there is no idling and there are no holidays, and every one, the lad

as well as his father, must always do his part, which is his best.

Fort Pelican, the nearest port at which the mail boat called, was seventy miles eastward from The Jug. With the uncertainty of wind and tide the boat journey to Fort Pelican usually consumed three days, and with equal time required for return, the voyage could seldom be accomplished in less than six days. Lem Horn and his family lived at Horn's Bight, thirty miles from The Jug, and fifteen miles beyond, at Caribou Arm, was Jerry Snook's cabin. Save an Eskimo settlement of half a dozen huts near Fort Pelican and the families of Lem Horn and Jerry Snook the country lying between The Jug and Fort Pelican was uninhabited. It was unlikely that evening would find the travellers in the vicinity of either Horn's or Snook's cabins, and therefore it was to be a camping trip, which was quite to the liking of the boys.

The boys washed the old fishing boat and packed the equipment and provisions for the voyage. Margaret baked three big loaves of white bread, and as a special treat a loaf of plum bread. The remaining provisions consisted of tea, a bottle of molasses for sweetening, flour, baking-powder, fat salt pork, lard, oleomargarine, salt and pepper. The culinary equipment included a frying-pan, a basin for mixing dough, a tin kettle for tea, a larger kettle to be used in cooking, one large cook-

ing spoon, four teaspoons and some tin plates. Each of the boys as well as Doctor Joe was provided with a sheath knife carried on the belt. The sheath knife serves the professional hunter as a cooking knife, as well as for eating and general purposes.

For camping use there was a cotton wedge tent, a small sheet-iron tent stove, three camp axes, some candles and matches, a file for sharpening the axes and a sleeping bag for each. Men in that land do not travel without arms, and it was decided that David should take a .44-40 carbine and Andy and Doctor Joe each a double barrel shotgun, for there might be an opportunity to shoot a fat goose or duck.

Thomas's big boat had two light masts rigged with leg-o'-mutton sails. Just forward of the foremast David and Andy placed some flat stones, and covering them with two or three inches of gravel set the tent stove upon the gravel. Here they could cook their meals at midday, and the gravel would protect the bottom of the boat from heat. A sufficient quantity of fire-wood was taken aboard, and the provisions and other equipment stowed under a short deck forward where the things would be protected from storm and all would be in readiness for an early start in the morning.

III

"'TIS THE GHOST OF LONG JOHN"

THE morning was clear and crisp. Breakfast was eaten by candle-light, and before sunrise Doctor Joe and the boys, with the tide to help them, worked the big boat down through The Jug and past the Point into Eskimo Bay. In the shelter of The Jug, which lay in the lee of the hills, the sails flapped idly and it was necessary to bring the long oars into service. But beyond the sheltered harbour a light northwest breeze caught and filled the sails, the oars were stowed, the rudder shipped, and with David at the tiller Doctor Joe lighted his pipe and settled himself for a quiet smoke while Andy and Jamie turned their attention to their scout Handbooks.

It was an inspiring morning. The sky was cloudless. The air was charged with scent of spruce and balsam fir, wafted down by the breeze from the forest, lying in dark and solemn silence and spreading away from the near-by shore until it melted into the blue haze of rolling hills far to the northward. The huge black back of a grampus rose a hundred feet from the boat and with a noise

like the loud exhaust of steam sank again beneath the surface of the Bay. Now and again a seal raised its head and looked curiously at the travellers and then hastily dived. Gulls and terns soared and circled overhead, occasionally dipping to the water to capture a choice morsel of food. A flock of wild geese, honking in flight, turned into a bight and alighted where a brook coursed down through a marsh to join the sea.

"There's some geese," remarked David, breaking the silence. "They're comin' up south now. We'll have a hunt when we gets home. They always feeds in that mesh when they're bidin' about the Bay."

Presently Andy exclaimed:

"I can tie un all! I can tie every knot in the book!"

"I can tie un, too!" said Jamie.

"Yes! Yes! There are the scout tests!" broke in Doctor Joe. "Suppose we all tie the knots and pass the tests."

Andy and Jamie tied them easily enough, and then Doctor Joe tied them himself to keep pace with the boys, and Andy relieved David at the tiller that he might try his hand at them; David not only tied all the knots illustrated in the Handbook, but for good measure added a bowline on a bight, a double carrick bend, a marlin hitch and a halliard hitch.

"That's wonderful easy to do," David declared

as he laid the rope down. "'Tis strange they calls that a test, 'tis so easy done."

"Easy for us," admitted Doctor Joe, "but for boys who have never had much to do with boats or ropes it's a hard test, and an important one. You chaps knew how to tie them, so in doing it you haven't learned anything new. Let us make up our minds as scouts to learn something new every day—something we never knew before, no matter how small or unimportant it may seem. Think what a lot we'll know next year that we do not know now; everything we learn, too, is sure to be of use to us sometime in our lives.

"As we go along we'll find there is a great deal to learn in this Handbook, and all of it is worth knowing. We don't look far ahead. Suppose we begin with the scout law. With your good memories you'll learn it before we go ashore to-night. I want you to learn the twelve points of the law in order as they appear in the book, so that you can repeat them and tell me in your own words what each point means."

Doctor Joe turned to the scout law and explained each point in detail. When he told them that "A Scout is kind" meant that they must not only be kind to people, but that they must protect and not kill harmless birds and animals, David protested:

"If we promises *that*, sir, 'twould stop us huntin' seals and deer and pa'tridges and plenty o' things."

"Oh, no!" explained Doctor Joe. "It does not mean that. It means that you must kill nothing *needlessly*. Here in Labrador we must kill seals and deer and partridges and other game for food and for their skins. That is the way we make our living. In the same way they have to kill cows and sheep and goats and pigs for food in the country I came from and to get skins for boots and gloves. In the same way we are permitted to kill game when necessary. But we're not to kill anything that's harmless unless we need it for some purpose. The Indians and other people about here shoot at loons for sport. I've seen them chase the loons in canoes and keep shooting at them every time they came up after a dive until the loons were too tired to dive quickly enough to get out of the way of the shot, and then the poor things were killed. The flesh isn't fit to eat and they're always thrown away. That is cruel."

"I never thought of un that way. I've killed loons too," David confessed, "but I'll never shoot at a loon again. 'Tis the same with gulls and other things we never uses when we kills, and just shoot at for fun."

"That's the idea," said Doctor Joe enthusiastically. "Now what do you think about killing hen partridges in summer?"

"We can kill pa'tridges, can't we?" asked David. "We always eats un, and you said we could kill un."

"But we've got to use our heads about it," Doctor Joe explained. "I'm talking now about *hen* partridges in *summer*. They always have broods of little partridges then. If you kill the mother all the little ones die, for they're too small to take care of themselves. Do you think that's right?"

"I never thought of un before," said David. "'Tis wicked to kill un! I'll never kill a hen pa'-tridge in summer again! Not me!"

"We'll have to be tellin' everybody in the Bay about that!" declared Andy. "Nobody has ever thought about the poor little uns starvin' and dyin'!"

"That'll be doing good scout work," Doctor Joe commended. "That's one way you'll be useful as scouts here in Labrador. Not only will you be showing kindness to the mother and little par-tridges, but if the mother is permitted to live and raise her brood all the little birds will be full grown by winter, and it will make that many more par-tridges that can be used for food when food is needed."

When presently Jamie announced that it was "'most noon" and he was "fair starvin'," and the others suddenly discovered that they were hungry too, a fire was lighted in the stove and a cozy lunch of hot tea sweetened with molasses, fried pork and bread was eaten with an appetite and relish such as only those can enjoy who live in the open. Then,

with growing interest, the lads returned to their scout books, and camping time came almost before they were aware.

The sun was drooping low in the west when David, indicating a low, wooded point, suggested:

"That's Flat P'int. The's good water there, and 'tis a fine camping place."

"Then we'll camp there," Doctor Joe agreed.

"Look! Look!" exclaimed Andy, as the boat approached the shore. "There's a porcupine!"

Following the direction in which Andy pointed a fat porcupine was discovered high up in a spruce tree feeding upon the tender branches and bark.

"Shall we have un for supper?" Andy asked excitedly.

"Aye," said David, "let's have un for supper. Fresh meat'll go fine."

A shot from the rifle, when they had landed, brought the unfortunate porcupine tumbling to the ground, and Andy proceeded at once to skin and dress his game for supper.

"I'll be cook and Andy cookee," Doctor Joe announced. "We'll get wood for the fire, David, and you and Jamie pitch the tent and get it ready."

Flat Point was well wooded, and the floor of the forest thickly carpeted with gray caribou moss. David selected a level spot between two trees on a little rise near the shore. The ridge rope was quickly stretched between the trees and the tent securely pegged down. Then David and Jamie

broke a quantity of low-hanging spruce boughs, which they snapped from the trees with a dexterous upward bend of the wrist. When a liberal pile of these had been accumulated at the entrance of the tent, David proceeded to lay the bed.

The rear of the tent was to be the head. Here he laid a row of the boughs, three deep, with the convex side uppermost, then he began "shingling" the boughs in rows toward the foot. This was done by placing the butt end of the bough firmly against the ground with half the bough, the convex side uppermost, overlapping the bough above it, as shingles are lapped on a roof. Thus continuing until the floor of the tent was covered he had a soft, fragrant springy bed, quite as soft and comfortable as a mattress, and upon this he and Jamie spread the sleeping bags.

In the meantime Doctor Joe and Andy had collected an ample supply of dry wood for the evening, and when, presently, David and Jamie joined them a cheerful fire was blazing and already an appetizing odour was rising from the stew kettle.

When the stew and some tender dumplings were done Doctor Joe lifted the kettle from the fire, and while he filled each plate with a liberal portion, and Andy poured tea, David put fresh wood upon the fire, for the evening had grown cold and frosty with the setting sun. The blazing fire was cheerful indeed as they settled themselves upon the seat of boughs and proceeded to enjoy their supper.

"Um-m-m!" exclaimed Andy. "You knows how to cook wonderful fine, Uncle!"

"'Tis *wonderful* fine stew!" seconded David.

"Not half bad," admitted Doctor Joe, "but Andy had as much to do with it as I, and the porcupine had a good deal to do with it. It was young and fat, and it's tender."

There is no pleasanter hour for the camper or voyageur than the evening hour by a blazing camp fire. There is no sweeter odour than that of the damp forest mingled with the smell of burning wood. Beyond the narrow circle of light a black wall rises, and behind the wall lies the wilderness with its unfathomed mysteries. Out in the darkness wild creatures move, silent, stealthy and unseen, behind a veil that human eyes cannot penetrate. But we know they are there going about the strange business of their life, and our imagination is awakened and our sensibilities quickened.

The camp fire is a shrine of comradeship and friendship. Here it was that the primordial ancestors of every living man and woman and child gathered at night with their families, in those far-off dark ages before history was written. The fire was their home. Here they found rest and comfort and protection from the savage wild beasts that roamed the forests. It was a place of veneration. The primitive instinct, perchance inherited from those far-off ancestors of ours, slumbering in

our souls, is sometimes awakened, and then we are called to the woods and the wild places that God made beautiful for us, and at night we gather around our camp fire as our ancient ancestors gathered around theirs, and we love it just as they loved it.

And so it was with the little camp fire on Flat Point and with Doctor Joe and the boys. With darkness the uncanny light of the Aurora Borealis flashed up in the north, its long, weird fingers of changing colours moving restlessly across the heavens. The forest and the wide, dark waters of Eskimo Bay sank behind a black wall.

There was absolute silence, save for the ripple of waves upon the shore, each busy with his own thoughts, until presently Jamie asked:

"Did you ever see a ghost, Uncle?"

"A ghost? No, lad, and I fancy no one else ever saw one except in imagination. What made you think of ghosts?"

"'Tis so—still—and dark out there," said Jamie, pointing toward the darkness beyond the fire-glow. "And—I were thinkin' I heard something."

"But they *is* ghosts, sir, plenty of un," broke in Andy. "Pop's seen ghosts and so has Zeke Hodge and Uncle Billy and plenty of folks. They says the ghost of Long John, the old Injun that used to be at the Post and was drowned, goes paddlin' and paddlin' about in a canoe o' nights."

"Yes," said David, "I'm thinkin' I saw Long

John's ghost myself one evenin'. I weren't certain of un, but it must have been he."

"Nonsense!" Doctor Joe had no patience with the belief popular among Labradormen that ghosts of men who have been drowned or killed return to haunt the scene of their death. "There's no such thing as a ghost."

"What's that now?" Jamie held up his hand for silence, and spoke in a subdued voice.

But out of the darkness came the rhythmic dipping of a paddle. They all heard it now. Doctor Joe arose, and closely followed by the boys, stepped down beyond the fire glow. In dim outline they could see the silhouette of a canoe containing the lone figure of a man paddling with the short, quick stroke of the Indian.

"'Tis the ghost of Long John!" breathed Jamie. "'Tis sure he!"

IV

SHOT FROM BEHIND

THE canoe was coming directly toward them. In a moment it touched the shore, and as its occupant stepped lightly out the boys with one accord exclaimed:

"Injun Jake! 'Tis Injun Jake!"

And so it proved. The greeting he received was hearty enough to leave no doubt in his mind that he was a welcome visitor. Perhaps it was the heartier because of the relief the boys experienced in the discovery that the lone canoeman was not, after all, the wraith of Long John, but was their friend Indian Jake in flesh and blood.

When his packs had been removed, Indian Jake lifted his canoe from the water, turned it upon its side and followed the boys to the fire where Doctor Joe awaited him.

"Just in time!" welcomed Doctor Joe, as he shook Indian Jake's hand. "We've finished eating, but there's plenty of stew in the kettle. Andy, pour Jake some tea."

Indian Jake, grunting his thanks, silently picked up David's empty plate and heaped it with stew and dumpling from the kettle without the ceremony of waiting to be served.

He was a tall, lithe, muscular half-breed, with small, restless, hawk-like eyes and a beaked nose that was not unlike the beak of a hawk. He had the copper-hued skin and straight black hair of the Indian, but otherwise his features might have been those of a white man. Indian Jake had been the trapping companion of David and Andy the previous winter, and, as previously stated, was this year to be Thomas Angus's trapping partner on the fur trails.

The boys were vastly fond of Indian Jake, and Thomas and Doctor Joe shared their confidence, but the Bay folk generally looked upon him with distrust and suspicion. Several years before, he had come to the Bay a penniless stranger. He soon earned the reputation of being one of the best trappers in the region. Then, suddenly, he disappeared owing the Hudson's Bay Company a considerable sum for equipment and provisions sold him on credit. It was well known that in the winter preceding his disappearance Indian Jake had had a most successful hunting season and was in possession of ample means to pay his debts. His failure to apply his means to this purpose was looked upon as highly dishonest—akin, indeed, to theft.

Two years later he reappeared, again penniless. The Company refused him further credit, and he had no means of purchasing the supplies necessary for his support during the trapping season in the

interior. It was at this time that Thomas Angus broke his leg, and it became necessary for David and Andy to take his place on the trails. They were too young to endure the long months of isolation without an older and experienced companion. There was none but Indian Jake to go with them, and he was engaged to hunt on shares a trail adjacent to theirs. With his share of the furs captured when the trapping season ended, Indian Jake discharged his old debt with the Company. This was not sufficient, however, to reëstablish confidence in him. There was a lurking suspicion among them, fostered by Uncle Ben Rudder of Tuggle Bight, the wiseacre and oracle of the Bay, that Indian Jake's payment of the debt was not prompted by honesty but by some ulterior motive.

Indian Jake emptied his plate. He refilled it with the last of the stew and again emptied it, in the interim swallowing several cups of hot tea.

"Good stew," he remarked in appreciation and praise when his meal was finished. "When were you gettin' back?"

"I reached The Jug day before yesterday," said Doctor Joe.

"Huh!" Indian Jake grunted approval, as he puffed industriously at his pipe. "Where you goin' now? To see Lem Horn?"

"No," Doctor Joe answered, "we're going to Fort Pelican to get some things I brought in on the mail boat."

"I been goose huntin'," Indian Jake explained. "Not much goose yet. Too early. Got four. Goin' to The Jug now to give Thomas a hand. Want to start for Seal Lake soon. Don't want to be late."

"Pop's thinkin' to start in a fortnight," said David.

"Good!" acknowledged Indian Jake. "Maybe we start sooner. Start when we're ready. I want to go quick. Have plenty time get there before freeze-up."

Indian Jake was apparently through talking. Doctor Joe and the boys made several attempts to continue the conversation, but only receiving responsive grunts, turned to a discussion of the flag and other scout problems while Indian Jake was absorbed in his own thoughts. Presently he rose and proceeded to unroll his bed.

"Plenty of room in the tent," Doctor Joe invited. "Better come in with us, Jake."

"Goin' early. Sleep here," he declined, as he spread a caribou skin upon the ground to protect himself from the damp earth. Then he produced a Hudson's Bay Company blanket, once white but now of uncertain shade, and rolling himself in the blanket, with his feet toward the fire, was soon snoring peacefully.

"We won't trouble to douse the fire," Doctor Joe suggested presently. "He wants to sleep by it and he'll look after it. Let's turn in."

And with the front of the tent open that they might enjoy the air and profit by the firelight, they were soon snug in their sleeping bags and as sound asleep as Indian Jake.

"High-o!"

The three boys sat up. It was broad daylight, and Doctor Joe, on his hands and knees, was looking out of the tent.

"Our visitor has gone, and there's little wonder for we've been sleeping like bears and it's broad daylight. Hurry, lads, or the sun'll be well up before we get away."

The boys sprang up and were soon dressed. The fire had burned low, indicating that Indian Jake had been gone for a considerable time. A fat goose was hanging from the limb of a tree. Fastened to it was a piece of birch bark, and scribbled upon the birch bark with a piece of charcoal from the fire, these words:

"cerprize fur the lads bekos they likes Goos."

Another surprise awaited them. When they lifted the lid of the large cooking kettle they found it nearly full of boiled goose.

"That's the way o' Indian Jake!" Andy exclaimed. "He's always plannin' fine surprises for folks."

"It's surely a fine surprise," said Doctor Joe. "Breakfast all ready but the tea, and a goose for to-night."

Every one hurried, and the sun was just rising

when they put out the fire and hoisted sail. There was little wind, however, and the light breeze soon dropped to a dead calm. Doctor Joe unshipped the rudder and began sculling, while the boys laboured at the long oars. At length the tide began running in, and progress was so slow it was decided to go ashore and await a turn of the tide or a breeze.

"Lem Horn lives just back o' that island," said David, indicating a small wooded island. "We might stop and bide there till a breeze comes, and see un."

In accordance with the suggestion Doctor Joe turned the boat inside the island, and there, on the mainland in the edge of a little clearing and not a hundred yards distant, stood Lem Horn's cabin. It was a secluded and peculiarly lonely spot, hidden by the island from the few boats that plied the Bay. Here lived Lem Horn and his wife and two sons, Eli, a young man of twenty-one years, and Mark, nineteen years of age.

"The's no smoke," observed Jamie.

"Maybe they're all down to Fort Pelican gettin' their winter outfit," suggested David.

"There seems to be no one about but the dogs," said Doctor Joe, as he stepped ashore with the painter and made it fast, while Lem's big sledge dogs, lolling in the sun, watched them curiously.

Visitors do not knock in Labrador. The cabins are always open to travellers whether or not the

host is at home. Andy was in advance, and opening the door he stopped on the threshold with an exclamation of horror.

Stretched upon the floor lay Lem Horn, his face and hair smeared with blood, and on the floor near him was a small pool of blood. A chair was overturned, and Lem's legs were tangled in a fish-net.

Doctor Joe leaned over the prostrate figure.

"Shot," said he, "and from behind!"

"Does you mean somebody shot he?" asked David, quite horrified.

"Yes, and it must have happened yesterday," said Doctor Joe.

V

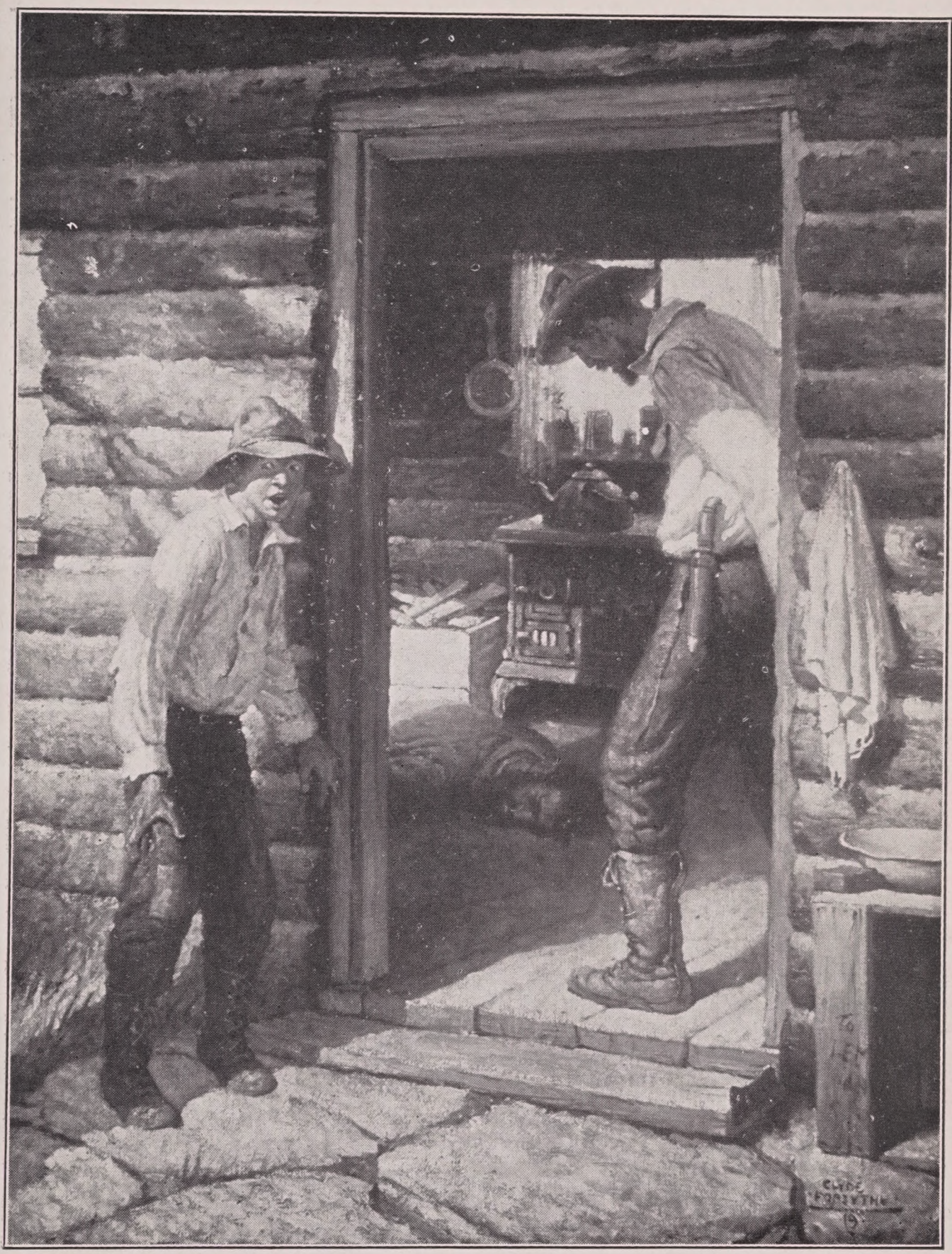
LEM HORN'S SILVER FOX

"HE'S alive, and this doesn't look like a bad wound," said Doctor Joe after a brief examination. "David, put a fire in the stove and heat some water! Andy, find some clean cloths! Jamie, bring up my medicine kit from the boat!"

The boys hurried to carry out the directions, while Doctor Joe made a more careful examination and discovered a second wound in Lem's back, just below the right shoulder.

"Both shots from the back," he mused. "This wound explains his condition. The one in the head only scraped the skull, and couldn't have more than stunned him for a short time. The other has caused a good deal of bleeding and may be serious."

With David's help Doctor Joe carried Lem to his bunk and removed his outer clothing. The water in the kettle on the stove was now warm enough for Doctor Joe's purpose. He poured some of it into a dish, and after dissolving in it some antiseptic tablets, cleansed and temporarily dressed the wounds.



STRETCHED UPON THE FLOOR LAY LEM HORN

Restoratives were now applied. Lem responded promptly. His breathing became perceptible, and at length he opened his eyes and stared at Doctor Joe. There was no recognition in the stare and in a moment the eyes closed. Presently they again opened, and this time Lem's lips moved.

"Where's Jane?" he asked feebly.

"Your wife seems to be away and the boys, too," said Doctor Joe. "We found you alone."

"Gone to Fort Pelican," Lem murmured after a moment's thought. He stared at Doctor Joe for several minutes, now with the look of one trying to recall something, and at length asked:

"What's—been—happenin' to me?"

"You've been shot," said Doctor Joe. "We found you on the floor. Some one has shot you."

"The silver! The silver fox skin!" Lem displayed excitement. "Be it on the table? I had un there!"

"There was no fur on the table when we came," said Doctor Joe.

Lem made a feeble attempt to rise, but Doctor Joe pressed him gently back upon the pillow, saying as he did so:

"You must lie quiet, Lem. Don't try to move. You're not strong enough."

Lem, like a weary child, closed his eyes in compliance. Several minutes elapsed before he opened them again, and then he looked steadfastly at Doctor Joe.

"Do you know who I am?" Doctor Joe asked.

"Yes," answered Lem in a feeble voice, "you're Doctor Joe. I knows you. I'm—glad you—came—Doctor Joe."

"Lem, you've been shot, but we'll pull you through. It isn't so bad, but you've lost some blood and that's left you weak for a little while. Don't talk now. Rest and you'll soon be on your feet again."

While Lem lay with closed eyes, Doctor Joe turned to consideration of the crime. If it were true that a silver fox skin had been taken, robbery was undoubtedly the motive for the shooting. But who could have known of the existence of the skin? And who could have come to this out-of-the-way place unobserved by the old trapper and shot him without warning?

Instinctively Indian Jake rose before his eyes. The half-breed's unsavoury reputation forced itself forward. And there was the circumstance of Indian Jake's visit to Flat Point camp the previous evening, his hurried departure in the morning, and his evident desire to hurry into the interior wilderness where he would be swallowed up for several months, and from which there would be innumerable opportunities to escape. Suddenly Doctor Joe was startled by Lem's voice, quite strong and natural now:

"I'm thinkin' 'twere that thief Injun Jake that shoots me."

"What makes you think so?" asked Doctor Joe.

"He were huntin' geese just below here, and he comes in and sits for a bit. I had a silver fox skin I were holdin' for a better price than they offers at Fort Pelican. 'Twere worth five hundred dollars whatever, and they only offers three hundred. I were busy mendin' my fishin' gear before I stows un away when Injun Jake comes. We talks about fur and I brings the silver out t' show he. Then I lays un on the table and keeps on mendin' the gear after he goes, thinkin' to put the fur up after I gets through mendin'."

"What time did Indian Jake come?" asked Doctor Joe.

"A bit after noon. Handy to one o'clock 'twere, for I were just boilin' the kettle. He eats a snack with me."

"How long did he stay? What time did he go?"

"I'm not knowin' just the time. I were a bit late boilin' the kettle. I boiled un around one o'clock. We sets down to the table about ten after and 'twere handy to half-past when we clears the table. Then Injun Jake has a smoke, and I shows he the silver, and I'm thinkin' 'twere a bit after two when he goes. He said he were goin' to stop on Flat P'int last night and get to Tom Angus's to-night whatever."

"A little after two o'clock when he left?"

"Maybe 'twere half-past. He had a down wind

to paddle agin', and he were sayin' 'twould be slow travellin', and 'twould take three or four hours whatever to make Flat P'int."

"And then what happened?"

"I were settin' mendin' the gear thinkin' to finish un and stow un away, and I keeps at un till just sundown. I were just gettin' up to put the kettle on for supper. That's all I remembers, exceptin' I wakes up two or three times and tries to move, but when I tries there's a wonderful hurt in my shoulder, and my head feels like she's bustin', and everything goes black in front of my eyes. If the fur's gone Injun Jake took un."

"It's strange," said Doctor Joe, "very strange. There's a bullet in your shoulder. After you rest a while we'll probe for it and see if we can get it out. Don't talk any more. Just lie quietly and sleep if you can."

The boys were out-of-doors. Doctor Joe was glad they had not heard Lem's accusation against Indian Jake. The half-breed had been good to them, and they held vast faith in his integrity. There was some hope that Lem's suspicions were not well founded; nevertheless Doctor Joe was forced to admit to himself that circumstances pointed to Indian Jake as the culprit. It was highly improbable that any one else should have been in the vicinity without Lem's knowledge. It was quite possible that Lem's statement of the hour when he was shot was incorrect, for his mind

could hardly yet be clear enough to be certain, without doubt, of details.

Lem quickly dropped into a refreshing sleep, and Doctor Joe left him for a little while to join the boys out-of-doors. He found them behind the house picking the goose Indian Jake had left in the tree at the Flat Point camp.

"How's Lem, sir? Is he hurt bad?" David asked as Doctor Joe seated himself upon a stump.

"He's sleeping now. After he rests a little we'll see how badly he's hurt," said Doctor Joe. "I fancy you chaps are thinking about dinner. Hungry already, I'll be bound!"

"Aye," grinned David, "wonderful hungry. 'Tis most noon, sir."

Doctor Joe consulted his watch.

"I declare it is. It must have been nearly eleven o'clock when we reached here. I didn't realize it was so late."

"'Twere ten minutes to eleven, sir," said Andy. "I were lookin' to see how long it takes us to come from Flat P'int."

"What time did we leave Flat Point?" asked Doctor Joe.

"'Twere twenty minutes before seven, sir." Andy drew his new watch proudly from his pocket to refer to it again, as he did upon every possible occasion.

"No," corrected David, "'twere only twenty-five minutes before seven when we leaves Flat P'int,

and fifteen minutes before eleven when we gets here. I looks to see."

"Perhaps your watches aren't set alike," suggested Doctor Joe. "Suppose we compare them."

The comparison disclosed a difference, as Doctor Joe predicted, of five minutes. Then each must needs set his watch with Doctor Joe's, which was a little slower than Andy's and a little faster than David's.

Doctor Joe made some mental calculations. Both David and Andy had observed their watches, and there could be no doubt of the length of time it had required them to come from Flat Point to Lem's cabin. They had consumed four hours, but their progress had been exceedingly slow. Indian Jake had doubtless travelled much faster in his light canoe, but, at best, with the wind against him, he could hardly have paddled from Lem's cabin to Flat Point in less than two hours. He had arrived one hour after sunset. If Lem were correct as to the time when the shooting took place Indian Jake could not be guilty. But still there was, with but one hour or possibly a little more in excess of the time between sunset and Indian Jake's arrival at camp, an uncertain alibi for Indian Jake. Lem may have been shot much earlier in the afternoon than he supposed. When Lem grew stronger it would be necessary to question him closely that the hour might be fixed with certainty. Whoever had shot and robbed Lem, must have known of the

existence of the silver fox skin, and been familiar with the surroundings. The shots had doubtless been fired through a broken pane in a window directly behind the chair in which Lem was sitting at the time.

"Why not cook dinner out here over an open fire?" Doctor Joe presently suggested. "You chaps are pretty noisy, and if you come into the house to cook it on the stove, I'm afraid you'll wake Lem up, and I want him to sleep."

"We'll cook un out here, sir," David agreed.

"'Tis more fun to cook here," Jamie suggested.

"Very well. When it's ready you may bring it in and we'll eat on the table. Lem will probably be awake by that time and he'll want something too. Stew the goose so there'll be broth, and we'll give some of it to Lem to drink."

"You'll have to go to Fort Pelican without me. I'll have to stay here and take care of Lem. If the wind comes up, and I think it will, you may get a start after dinner," and Doctor Joe returned to the cabin to watch over his patient.

The goose was plucked. David split a stick of wood, and with his jack-knife whittled shavings for the fire. The knife had a keen edge, for David was a born woodsman and every woodsman keeps his tools always in good condition, and the shavings he cut were long and thin. He did not cut each shaving separately, but stopped his knife just short of the end of the stick, and when several

shavings were cut, with a twist of the blade he broke them from the main stick in a bunch. Thus they were held together by the butt to which they were attached. He whittled four or five of these bunches of shavings, and then cut some fine splints with his ax.

David was now ready to light his fire. He placed two sticks of wood upon the ground, end to end, in the form of a right angle, with the opening between the sticks in the direction from which the wind came. Taking the butt of one of the bunches of shavings in his left hand, he scratched a match with his right hand and lighted the thin end of the shavings. When they were blazing freely he carefully placed the thick end upon the two sticks where they came together, on the inside of the angle, with the burning end resting upon the ground. Thus the thick end of the shavings was elevated. Fire always climbs upward, and in an instant the whole bunch of shavings was ablaze. Upon this he placed the other shavings, the thin ends on the fire, the butts resting upon the two sticks at the angle. With the splints which he had previously prepared arranged upon this they quickly ignited, and upon them larger sticks were laid, and in less than five minutes an excellent cooking fire was ready for the pot.

The goose was covered with a fine fuzz, and before disjointing it David held it over the blaze until the fuzz was thoroughly singed and the sur-

face of the skin clear. Then he proceeded to draw and cut the goose into pieces of suitable size for stewing, placed them in the kettle, and covered them with water from Lem's spring.

In the meantime Andy cut a stiff green pole about five feet in length. The thick end he sharpened, and near the other end cut a small notch. Using the thick or sharpened end like a crowbar, he drove it firmly into the ground with the small end directly above the fire. Placing a stone between the ground and sloping pole, that the pole might not sag too low with the weight of the kettle, he slipped the bail of the kettle into the notch at the small end of the pole, where it hung suspended over the blaze.

Preparing a similar pole, and placing it in like manner, Andy filled the teakettle and put it over the fire to heat for tea.

"I'm thinkin'," suggested David as he dropped four or five thick slices of pork into the kettle of goose, "'twould be fine to have hot bread with the goose."

"Oh, make un! Make un!" exclaimed Jamie.

"Aye," seconded Andy, "hot bread would go fine with the goose."

Andy fetched the flour up from the boat and David dipped about a quart of it into the mixing pan. To this he added four heaping teaspoonfuls of baking-powder and two level teaspoonfuls of salt. After stirring the baking-powder and salt

well into the flour he added to it a heaping cooking spoonful of lard—a quantity equal to two heaping tablespoonfuls. This he rubbed into the flour with the back of the large cooking spoon until it was thoroughly mixed. He now added water while he mixed it with the flour, a little at a time, until the dough was of the consistency of stiff biscuit dough.

The bread was now ready to bake. There was no oven, and the frying-pan must needs serve instead. The interior of the frying-pan he sprinkled liberally with flour that the dough might not stick to it. Then cutting a piece of dough from the mass he pulled it into a cake just large enough to fit into the frying-pan and about half an inch in thickness, and laid the cake carefully into the pan.

With a stick he raked from the fire some hot coals. With the coals directly behind the pan, and with the bread in the pan facing the fire and exposed to the direct heat, he placed it at an angle of forty-five degrees, supporting it in that position with a sharpened stick, one end forced into the earth and the tip of the handle resting upon the other end. The bread thus derived heat at the bottom from the coals and at the top from the main fire.

"She's risin' fine!" Jamie presently announced.

"She'll rise fast enough," David declared confidently. "There's no fear of that."

There was no fear indeed. In ten minutes the

loaf had increased to three times its original thickness and the side nearer the ground took on a delicate brown, for the greater heat of a fire is always reflected toward the ground. David removed the pan from its support, and, without lifting the loaf from the pan, moved it around until the brown side was opposite the handle. Then he returned the pan to its former position. Now the browned half was on the upper or handle side, while the unbrowned half was on the side near the ground, and in a few minutes the whole loaf was deliciously browned.

While the bread was baking David drove a stick into the ground at one side and a little farther from the fire than the pan. When the loaf had browned on top to his satisfaction he removed it from the pan and leaned it against the stick with the bottom exposed to the fire, and proceeded to bake a second loaf.

"Let me have the dough that's left," Jamie begged.

"Aye, take un and you likes," David consented. "There'll be too little for another loaf, whatever."

Jamie secured a dry stick three or four feet long and about two inches in diameter. This he scraped clean of bark, and pulling the dough into a rope as thick as his finger wound it in a spiral upon the center of the stick. Then he flattened the dough until it was not above a quarter of an inch in thickness.

On the opposite side of the fire from David, that he might not interfere with David's cooking, he arranged two stones near enough together for an end of the stick to rest on each. Here he placed it with the dough in the center exposed to the heat. As the dough on the side of the stick near the fire browned he turned the stick a little to expose a new surface, until his twist was brown on all sides.

"Have some of un," Jamie invited. "We'll eat un to stave off the hunger before dinner. I'm fair starved."

David and Andy were not slow to accept, and Jamie's crisp, hot twist was quickly devoured.

The kettle of stewing goose was sending forth a most delicious appetizing odour. David lifted the lid to season it, and stir it with the cooking spoon. Jamie and Andy sniffed.

"U-m-m!" from Jamie.

"Oh, she smells fine!" Andy breathed.

"Seems like I can't wait for un!" Jamie declared.

"She's done!" David at length announced. "Make the tea, Andy."

Using a stick as a lifter David removed the kettle of goose from the fire, while Andy put tea in the other kettle, which was boiling, removing it also from the fire.

"You bring the bread along, Jamie, and you the tea, Andy," David directed, turning into the cabin with the kettle of goose.

Lem had just awakened from a most refreshing sleep, and when he smelled the goose he declared:

"I'm hungrier'n a whale."

Doctor Joe laid claim also to no small appetite, an appetite, indeed, quite superior to that described by Lem.

"A whale!" he sniffed. "Why, I'm as hungry as seven whales! Seven, now! Big whales, too! No small whales about *my* appetite!"

The three boys laughed heartily, and David warned:

"We'll all have to be lookin' out or they won't be a bite o' goose left for anybody if Doctor Joe gets at un first!"

Doctor Joe arranged a plate for Lem, upon which he placed a choice piece of breast and a section of one of David's loaves, which proved, when broken, to be light and short and delicious. Then he poured Lem a cup of rich broth from the kettle, and while Lem ate waited upon him before himself joining the boys at the table.

"How are you feeling, Lem?" asked Doctor Joe when every one was through and the boys were washing dishes.

"My head's a bit soggy and I'm a bit weak, and the's a wonderful pain in my right shoulder when I moves un," said Lem. "If 'tweren't for my head and the weakness and the pain I'd feel as well as ever I did, and I'd be achin' to get after that

thief Indian Jake. As 'tis I'll bide my time till I feels nimbler."

"Do you think you could let me fuss around that shoulder a little while?" Doctor Joe asked. "Does it hurt too badly for you to bear it?"

"Oh, I can stand un," said Lem. "Fuss around un all you wants to, Doctor Joe. You knows how to mend un and patch un up, and I wants un mended."

Doctor Joe called Andy to his assistance with another basin of warm water, in which, as previously, he dissolved antiseptic tablets, explaining to the boys the reason, and adding:

"If a wound is kept clean nature will heal it. Nothing you can apply to a wound will assist in the healing. All that is necessary is to keep it clean and keep it properly bandaged to protect it from infection."

"Wouldn't a bit of wet t'baccer draw the soreness out?" Lem suggested.

"No! No! No!" protested Doctor Joe, properly horrified. "Never put tobacco or anything else on a wound. If you do you will run the risk of infection which might result in blood poison, which might kill you."

"I puts t'baccer on cuts sometimes and she always helps un," insisted Lem.

"It's simply through the mercy of God, then, and your good clean blood that it hasn't killed you," declared Doctor Joe.

From his kit Doctor Joe brought forth bandages and gauze and some strange looking instruments, and turned his attention to the shoulder. Lem gritted his teeth and, though Doctor Joe knew he was suffering, never uttered a whimper or complaint.

An examination disclosed the fact that the bullet had coursed to the right, and Doctor Joe located it just under the skin directly forward of the arm pit. Though it was necessarily a painful wound, he was relieved to find that no vital organ had been injured, and he was able to assure Lem that he would soon be around again and be as well as ever.

When the bullet was extracted Doctor Joe examined it critically, washed it and placed it carefully in his pocket. It proved to be a thirty-eight caliber, black powder rifle bullet. Doctor Joe had no doubt of that. He had made a study of firearms and had the eye of an expert.

"It's half-past two, boys. A westerly breeze is springing up, and I think you'd better go on to Fort Pelican," Doctor Joe suggested. "I'll give you a note to the factor instructing him to deliver all the things to you. You'll be able to make a good run before camping time. Stop in here on your way back."

The boys made ready and said good-bye, spread the sails, and were soon running before a good breeze. Doctor Joe watched them disappear

around the island, and returning to Lem's bedside asked:

"Lem, do you know what kind of a rifle Indian Jake carried?"

"I'm not knowin' rightly," said Lem. "'Twere either a forty-four or a thirty-eight. 'Twere he did the shootin'. Nobody else has been comin' about here the whole summer. I'm not doubtin' he's got my silver fox, and I'm goin' to get un back *whatever*. He'd never stop at shootin' to rob, but he'll have to be quicker'n I be at shootin', to keep the fur!"

"When are you expecting Mrs. Horn and the boys back?" asked Doctor Joe.

"This evenin' or to-morrow whatever," said Lem. "They've been away these five days gettin' the winter outfit at Fort Pelican."

If Indian Jake were guilty, it was highly probable that he would take prompt steps to flee the country. He could not dispose of the silver fox skin in the Bay, for all of the local traders had already seen and appraised it, and they would undoubtedly recognize it if it were offered them. Indian Jake would probably plunge into the interior, spend the winter hunting and in the spring make his way to the St. Lawrence, where he would be safe from detection.

Doctor Joe made these calculations while he sat by the bedside, and his patient dozed. He was sorry now that he had not sent the boys back to

The Jug with a letter to Thomas explaining what had occurred. All of the evidence pointed to Indian Jake's guilt, and there could be little doubt of it if it should prove that the half-breed carried a thirty-eight fifty-five rifle. Thomas would know, and he would take prompt action to prevent Indian Jake's escape with the silver fox skin. Should it prove, however, that Indian Jake's rifle was of different calibre he should be freed from suspicion.

It was dusk that evening when the boat bearing Eli and Mark and Mrs. Horn rounded the island. Doctor Joe met them. They had seen the boys and had received from them a detailed account of what had happened, and Mrs. Horn was greatly excited. Her first thought was for Lem, and she was vastly relieved when she saw him, as he declared he did not feel "so bad," and Doctor Joe assured her he would soon be around again and as well as ever.

Then there fell upon the family a full realization of their loss. The silver fox skin that had been stolen was their whole fortune. The proceeds of its sale was to have been their bulwark against need. It was to have given them a degree of independence, and above all else the little hoard that its sale would have brought them was to have lightened Lem's burden of labour during his declining years.

Eli Horn was a big, broad-shouldered, swarthy young man of few words. For an hour after he

heard his father's detailed story of Indian Jake's visit to the cabin he sat in sullen silence by the stove. Suddenly he arose, lifted his rifle from the pegs upon which it rested against the wall, dropped some ammunition into his cartridge bag, and swinging it over his shoulder strode toward the door.

"Where you goin', Eli?" asked Lem from his bunk.

"To hunt Indian Jake," said Eli as he closed the door behind him and passed out into the night.

VI

THE TRACKS IN THE SAND

A SMART southwest breeze had sprung up. White caps were dotting the Bay, and with all sails set the boat bowled along at a good speed.

David held the tiller, while Andy and Jamie busied themselves with their handbooks. They were an hour out of Horn's Bight when David sighted the Horn boat beating up against the wind. Drawing within hailing distance he told them of the accident.

Mrs. Horn, greatly excited, asked many questions. David assured her that her husband's injuries were not serious, nevertheless she was quite certain Lem lay at death's door.

"'Tis the first time I leaves home in most a year," she lamented. "I were feelin' inside me 'twere wrong to go and leave Lem alone. And now he's gone and been shot and liker'n not most killed."

"'Tis too bad to make Mrs. Horn worry so. I'm wonderfully sorry," David sympathized, as the boats passed beyond speaking distance. "She'll worry now till they gets home, and the way Lem

et goose I'm thinkin' he ain't hurt bad enough to worry much about he."

"They'll get there to-night whatever," said Andy. "'Tis the way of Mrs. Horn to worry, even when we tells she Lem's doin' fine."

"I'm wonderin' and wonderin' who 'twere shot Lem," said David. "Whoever 'twere had un in his heart to do murder."

"Whoever 'twere looked in through the window and saw Lem with the fine silver fox on the table and sets out to get the fox," reasoned Andy. "The shootin' were done through the window where the's a pane of glass broke out."

"I sees where the's a pane of glass out," said David. "'Twas not fresh broke though."

"No, 'twere an old break," Andy agreed. "I goes to look at un, and I sees fresh tracks under the window where the man stands when he shoots."

"Tracks!" exclaimed David. "I never thought to look for tracks now! I weren't thinkin' of that! You thinks of more things than I ever does, Andy."

"I weren't thinkin' of tracks either," said Andy, disclaiming credit for their discovery. "Whilst you bakes the bread I just goes to look where the window is broke, and when I'm there I sees the strange lookin' tracks."

"Strange, now! How was they strange?" asked Jamie excitedly, scenting a deepening mystery.

"They was made with boots with *nails* in the bottom of un," explained Andy. "They was nails all over the bottom of *them* boots, and they was *big* boots, them was. They made big tracks—*wonderful* big tracks."

"'Tis strange, now! Did you trace un, Andy? Did you see what way the tracks goes?" asked David.

"'Twere only under the window where the ground were soft and bare of moss that the tracks showed the nails. I tracks un down though to where they comes in a boat and the boat goes again," Andy explained. "The tracks were a day old, and down by the water the tide's been in and washed un away. Whoever 'twere makes un were beyond findin' whatever. They were goin' away I'm thinkin' right after they shoots Lem and takes his silver."

"Did you tell Doctor Joe about the tracks?" asked David.

"No, I weren't thinkin' to tell he when we goes in to eat, and he weren't wantin' us in before that fearin' we'd wake Lem. The tracks weren't of much account whatever. The folk that shot Lem were leavin' in a boat and we couldn't track the boat to find out who 'twere."

A drizzling rain began to fall before they made camp that night. It was too wet and dreary under the dripping trees for an open camp fire. The stove was therefore brought into service and set

up in the tent, and there they cooked and ate their supper by candle-light.

On a cold and stormy night there is no article in the camp equipment more useful than a little sheet-iron stove. With its magic touch it transforms a wet and dismal tent into the snuggest and coziest and most comfortable retreat in the whole world. Outside the wind was now dashing the rain in angry gusts against the canvas, and moaning drearily through the tree tops. Within the fire crackled cheerily. The tent was dry and snug and warm. The bed of fragrant balsam and spruce boughs, the smell of the fire and the soft candle-light combined to give it an indescribable atmosphere of luxury.

In the morning the weather had not improved. The wind had risen during the night, and was driving the rain in sheets over the Bay. David went outside to make a survey, and when he returned he reported:

"'Twill be a nasty day abroad."

"Let's bide here till the rain stops," suggested Jamie.

"The wind's fair, and if she keeps up and don't turn too strong we'll make Fort Pelican by evenin' whatever, if we goes," David objected.

"'Twon't be so bad, once we're out and gets used to un," said Andy.

"No, 'twon't be so bad," urged David. "The wind may shift and fall calm, when the rain's over,

and if we bides here we'll lose time in gettin' to Fort Pelican. I'm for goin' and makin' the best of un."

"I won't mind un," agreed Jamie, stoutly. "I got grit to travel in the rain, and we wants to make a fast cruise of un."

It was "nasty" indeed when after breakfast they broke camp and set sail. In a little while they were wet to the skin, and it was miserably cold; but they were used enough to the beat of wind and rain in their faces, and all declared that it was not "so bad" after all. To these hardy lads of The Labrador rain and cold was no great hardship. It was all "in a day's work," and scudding along before a good breeze, and looking forward to a good dinner in the kitchen at Fort Pelican, and to a snug bed at night, they quite forgot the cold and rain.

During the morning the wind shifted to the westward, and before noon it drew around to the northwest. With the shift of wind the rain ceased, and the clouds broke. Then Andy lighted a fire in the stove, boiled the kettle and fried a pan of salt pork. Hot tea, with bread dipped in the warm pork grease, warmed them and put them in high spirits.

"'Tis fine we didn't bide in camp," remarked David as he swallowed a third cup of tea. "With this fine breeze we'll make Fort Pelican to-night, whatever."

"I'm fine and warm now," declared Jamie, "but

'twas a bit hard to face the rain when we starts this marnin'."

"'Tis always the thinkin' about un that makes things hard to do," observed David. "Things we has to do seems wonderful hard before we gets at un, but mostly they're easy enough after we tackles un. The thinkin' beforehand's the hardest part of any hard job."

The sun broke out between black clouds scudding across the sky. The wind was gradually increasing in force. By mid-afternoon half a gale was blowing, a heavy sea was running, and the old boat, heeling to the gale, was in a smother of white water.

"We're makin' fine time!" shouted David, shaking the spray from his hair.

"We'll sure make Fort Pelican this evenin' early," Andy shouted back.

"We'll not make un!" Jamie protested. "The wind's gettin' too strong! We'll have to go ashore and make camp!"

"The boat'll stand un," laughed David. "She's a sturdy craft in a breeze."

"I'm afeared," said Jamie.

"'A scout is brave,'" quoted Andy.

"'Tisn't meant for a scout to be foolish," Jamie insisted. "I'm afeared of bein' foolish."

"You was braggin' of havin' grit," Andy taunted.

"I has grit and a stout heart," Jamie proudly

asserted, "but the's no such need of haste as to tempt a gale. 'Tis time to lie to and camp."

David's answer was lost in the smother of a great roller that chased them, and breaking astern nearly swept him from the tiller. When the lads caught their breath there was a foot of sea in the bottom of the boat.

"Bail her out!" bellowed David, shaking the water from his eyes.

"Jamie's right! 'Tis blowin' too high for comfort!" shouted Andy, as he and Jamie, each with a kettle, bailed. "We'd better not risk goin' on! Find a lee to make a landin', Davy."

"'Tis against reason not to take shelter!" piped Jamie.

"Fort Pelican's only ten miles away!" David shouted back in protest. "We'll soon make un in this fine breeze!"

The boat was riding on her beam ends. White horses breaking over her bow sent showers of foam her whole length. A sudden squall that nearly capsized her roused David suddenly to their danger.

"Reef the mains'l!" he shouted.

"Make for the lee of Comfort Island!" sputtered Andy through the spray, as he and Jamie sprang for the mainsail to reef it.

"Make for un!" echoed Jamie. "'Tis against reason to keep goin'."

The wind shrieked through the rigging. An-

other great roller all but swamped them. The sudden fury of the wind, the ever higher piling seas, and the rollers that had so nearly overwhelmed the boat brought to David a full sense of their peril. He had been foolhardy and headstrong in his determination to continue to Fort Pelican. He realized this now even more fully than Andy and Jamie.

David was a good seaman and fearless, with a full measure of faith in his skill. Now that his eyes were open to the peril in which he had placed them, he knew that all the skill he possessed and perhaps more would be required to take them safely into shelter.

Comfort Island with its offer of snug harbour lay a half mile to leeward. David brought the boat before the wind, and headed directly for the island.

Great breakers, pounding the high, rock-bound shores of Comfort Island, and booming like cannon, threw their spray a hundred feet in the air, enveloping the island in a cloud of mist.

Stretching away from the island for a mile to the westward was a rocky shoal known as the Devil's Arm. At high tide, in calm weather, it might be crossed, but now it was a great white barrier of roaring breakers rising in mighty geysers above the sea.

To the eastward of the island was a mass of black reefs known as the Devil's Tea Kettle. The

Devil's Tea Kettle was always an evil place. Now it was a great boiling cauldron whose waters rose and fell in a seething white mass.

It was quite out of the question to round the Devil's Arm and beat back against the wind to the lee of the island. There was a narrow passage between the Devil's Tea Kettle and the island. If he could make this passage it would be a simple matter to fall in behind the island to shelter and safety.

All of these things David saw at a glance. It was a desperate undertaking, but it was the only chance, and he held straight for the passage. If he could keep the boat to her course, he would make it. If a sudden squall of wind overtook them the leeway would throw them upon the island breakers and they would be swallowed up in an instant and pounded to pieces upon the rocks.

Over and over again David breathed the prayer: "Lord, take us through safe! Lord, take us through safe!" His face was set, but his nerves were iron. Andy and Jamie, tense with the peril and excitement of the adventure, crouched in the bottom of the boat. As they drew near the island, Jamie shouted encouragingly:

"Keep your grit, and a stout heart like a man, Davy!" but the roar of breakers drowned his voice, and David did not hear.

"Is you afraid, Jamie?" Andy yelled in Jamie's ear.

"Aye," answered Jamie, "but I has plenty of grit."

He who knows danger and meets it manfully, though he fears it, is brave, and Jamie and all of them were brave.

The boat was in the passage at last. David, every nerve tense, held her down to it. On the right seethed the Devil's Tea Kettle, sending forth a continuous deafening roar. On the left was Comfort Island with a boom! boom! of thundering breakers smashing against its high, sullen bulwarks of black rocks. The boat was so near that spray from the breakers fell over it in a shower.

It was over in a moment. The Devil's Tea Kettle, with all its loud threats, was behind them. The boat shot down along the shore, David swung to port, and they were safe in the quiet waters to the lee of the island.

"Thank the Lord!" said David reverently, as he brought the little craft to and the sail flapped idly.

"'Twere a close shave," breathed Jamie.

"A *wonder*ful close shave," echoed Andy.

"You had grit," said Jamie. "You has plenty o' grit, Davy—and a stout heart, like a man. 'Twere wonderful how you cracked her through! The's nary a man on the coast could have done better'n that!"

"'Twere easy enough," David boasted with a laugh as he wiped the spray from his face, and

unshipping the rudder proceeded to scull the boat into a natural berth between the rocks.

Hardly a breath of the gale raging outside reached them in their snug little harbour. The boat was made fast with the painter to a ledge, and the boys climbed to the high, rocky shore.

An excellent camping place was discovered a hundred yards back in a grove of stunted spruce trees that had rooted themselves in the scant soil that covered the rocks, and held fast, despite the Arctic blasts that swept across the Bay to rake the island during the long winters. Here the tent was pitched, and everything carried up from the boat and stowed within to dry. Fifteen minutes later the tent stove was crackling cheerily and sending forth comfort to the drenched young mariners.

"There'll be no hurry in the marnin'," said David when they had eaten supper and lighted a candle. "We'll stay up to-night till we gets the outfit all dried, and if we're late about un we'll sleep a bit later in the marnin', to make up. We'll make Fort Pelican in an hour, or two hours *what*-ever, if we has a civil breeze in the marnin'."

"We'll not be gettin' away from Fort Pelican to-morrow, will we?" asked Andy.

"We'll take the day for visitin' the folk and hearin' the news, and start back the marnin' after," suggested David.

It was near midnight when they crawled into their beds to drop into a ten-knot sleep, and they

slept so soundly that none of them awoke until they were aroused by the sun shining upon the tent the next morning.

Breakfast was prepared and eaten leisurely. There was no hurry. The wind had fallen to a moderate stiff breeze, and Fort Pelican, through the narrows connecting Eskimo Bay with the sea outside, was almost in sight.

When the dishes were washed Andy and Jamie took down the tent, while David shouldered a pack and preceded them to the place where they had moored the boat the previous evening. A few minutes later he came running back, and in breathless excitement startled them with the announcement:

"The boat's gone!"

"Gone where?" asked Andy incredulously.

"Gone! I'm not knowin' *where!*" exclaimed David.

"Has she been took?" asked Jamie, excitedly.

"Took!" said David. "The painter were untied and she were took! The's tracks about of big boots with nails in un!"

Andy and Jamie ran down with David. No trace of the boat was to be found.

In the earth above the shore were plainly to be seen the tracks of two men wearing hobnailed boots.

"The's fresh tracks," declared David.

"Made this marnin'," Andy agreed. "The's

the same kind of tracks as the ones I sees under Lem's window. Whoever 'twere made these tracks shot Lem and took his silver."

"And now we're left here on the island with no way of gettin' off," said David.

"What'll we be doin'? How'll we ever get away?" asked Jamie in consternation.

But that was a question none of them could answer.

VII

THE MYSTERY OF THE BOAT

THE boys looked at each other in consternation. They were marooned on a desolate, rocky, sparsely wooded island. Boats passed only at rare intervals and a fortnight, or even a month, might elapse before an opportunity for rescue offered. Their provisions would scarcely last a week, and the island was destitute of game.

"Whoever 'twere took the boat," Andy suggested presently, "were on the island when we comes."

"Aye," David agreed, "and makin' for Fort Pelican. They been up as far as Lem's and they's gettin' away with Lem's silver to sell un."

"'Tis strange boots they wears," said Jamie. "Strange boots them is with nails in un."

"'Twere no man of The Labrador made them tracks," David declared.

"I never sees boots with nails in un," said Andy, "except the boots the lumber folks wears over at the new camp at Grampus River."

"Aye," agreed David, "they wears un. When we goes over with Pop last month when the big

steamer comes I sees un. Plenty of un wears boots with nails in."

"That's who 'twere took our boat!" said Andy. "'Twere men from the Grampus River lumber camp."

"Let's track un and see where they were camped," suggested David.

The trail was easily followed. Here and there a footprint appeared where soil had drifted in among the rocks above the shore. The trail led them three hundred yards to the eastward, and then down into a sheltered hollow just above the water's edge, where a small boat was drawn up upon the shore.

"Here's a boat!" exclaimed Jamie, who had run ahead.

"A boat!" shouted David. "They left un and took our boat."

"And good reason!" said Jamie, who had reached the skiff. "The bottom's half knocked out of un."

It was evident that the boat had been driven upon the rocks in making a landing, and a jagged hole a foot square appeared in the bottom, rendering it in that condition quite useless. Near by a tent had been pitched, and there was no doubt that the men who had abandoned the boat had been in camp for a day at least in the sheltered hollow.

The boys turned the boat over and examined the break.

"'Tis a bad place to mend," observed David.

"But we can mend un," declared Andy. "We can mend un by noon whatever, and get to Fort Pelican this evenin'."

"I'm doubtin'," David shook his head. "'Twill take a day to mend un whatever, and she'll be none too safe. 'Twill be hard to make un water-tight."

"We can mend un," Andy insisted.

A close examination of the tracks disclosed the fact that there had been two men in the party. They had reached the island before the rain of two days before. This was disclosed by the fact that some of the tracks were partially washed away by the rain, and the earth was caked where the wind and sun had dried it after the rain.

Natives of the coast, as was the case with David and Jamie and Andy, wore home-made sealskin boots in summer and buckskin moccasins in winter. The sealskin boots had moccasin feet with one thickness of skin, and were soft and pliable. None of them ever wore soled boots that would admit of hobnails. It was plain to the boys, therefore, that the men who had made the tracks were not natives of the country.

Early in the summer a lumber company had begun the erection of a camp at Grampus River, which lay twenty miles to the southward from The Jug, and on the opposite side of Eskimo Bay. A steamship had brought in men and supplies, and all summer men had been building camps and pre-

paring for lumbering operations during the coming winter.

It was the first steamer to enter the Bay and its advent had been an occasion of much curiosity on the part of the people. Many of them made excursions to Grampus River to see the strangers at work. Thomas had made such an excursion with David and Andy. Strange, rough, blasphemous men they seemed to the God-fearing folk of the country. These were the men wearing hobnailed boots of which David spoke, and there was small doubt in the mind of the boys that the men who had camped on the island and had stolen the boat were from the Grampus River lumber camp.

It proved a tedious undertaking to repair and make seaworthy the damaged boat. The trees on the island were, for the most part, small gnarled spruce, twisted and stunted by the northern blasts which swept the Bay. After some search, however, they discovered a white spruce tree suitable for their purpose, with a trunk ten inches in diameter. David felled it and cut from its butt a two-foot length. This he proceeded to split into as thin slabs as possible. Then with their jack-knives the boys began the tedious task of whittling the surfaces of the slabs into smooth boards, first trimming them down to an inch and a half in thickness with the axes.

"How'll we make un fast when we gets un done?" asked Jamie. "We has no nails."

"I'm thinkin' of that," said David. "I'm not knowin' yet, but we'll find some way."

"I've got a way," Andy announced. "I been thinkin' and thinkin' and I found a way to make un fast."

"How'll you make un fast now without nails?" David asked expectantly.

"We'll tie un with spruce roots, like the Injuns puts their canoes together," explained Andy. "We'll cut holes in each end of un in the right place to tie un fast to the braces of the boat. We'll have to make holes in the bottom of the boat each side of the braces for the roots to come through so we can make un fast. That'll hold un. Then when we've made un fast we'll caulk un up with spruce gum."

"Why can't we cut strips of sealskin off our sleepin' bags for strings to tie un with?" suggested David. "'Twould be easier than makin' spruce root strings, and quicker too, and the sealskin would be strong and hold un tight."

"Yes, and soon's the sealskin gets wet she'll stretch," Andy objected. "Then the boards would loosen up and let the water in."

"I never thought of the sealskin stretchin', but she sure would. You're fine at thinkin' things out, Andy!" said David admiringly. "The spruce roots won't stretch though. 'Tis a fine way to fix un now, and she'll work. The's no doubtin' she'll work."

"'Twill take all day," Andy calculated, adding with pride, "but once we gets un on they'll hold. I'll get the roots now and put un to soak."

Andy dug around the white spruce tree and in a little while gathered a sufficient quantity of long string-like roots. He scraped them and then split them carefully with his knife. When they were split he filled the big kettle with water from a spring, placed the roots in it and put them over to boil.

They all worked as hard as they could on the boards, and when dinner time came David announced that the boards were smooth enough for their purpose.

"Now all we'll have to do," said he as he sliced pork for dinner, "is to make the holes in un and fasten un on."

"What were that now?" Jamie interrupted as a hoarse blast broke upon the air.

"'Tis the steamer whistle!" David dropped the knife with which he was slicing pork, and with Jamie and Andy at his heels ran to the top of the highest rock on the island, where a wide view of the Bay lay before them.

A mile away the lumber company's big steamer was feeling its way cautiously toward the west, bound inward to the Grampus River camps. The boys waved their caps and shouted at the top of their lungs, but no one on the steamer appeared to see them. It was not until the great strange vessel

had become a mere speck in the distance that they turned back to the preparation of dinner.

"They didn't see us," said David in disappointment.

"We're not wantin' to go to Grampus River, whatever," Andy cheered. "We're goin' to Fort Pelican when we has the boat fixed up, and she's 'most done."

After dinner they settled to the task. Two of the narrow boards which they had prepared were required to cover the break, which occurred between two braces. The edges of the boards where they were to join were whittled straight, that the joint might be made as tight as possible. Then David held them in place while Andy marked the position for the holes through which the spruce root thongs were to pass.

Four holes were to be cut in each end of both boards, and holes to match in the bottom of the boat, and in an hour they were neatly reamed out. When Andy removed his thongs from the water they were quite soft and pliable, and proved to be strong and tough.

Andy lashed the boards into place, threading the thongs through the holes and drawing them around the brace several times at each place where provision had been made for them. Thus a dozen thicknesses of fiber bound the boards to the brace at each set of holes.

It was now necessary to collect the spruce gum

and prepare it. Gum was plentiful enough, and in half an hour they had collected enough to half fill the frying-pan. To this was added a little lard, and the gum and grease melted over the fire and thoroughly mixed.

"What you puttin' the grease in for?" asked Jamie curiously.

"So when we pours un in the cracks and she hardens she won't be brittle and crack," David explained.

The hot mixture was now poured into the joints between the boards and at all points where the new boards came into contact with the boat, and into the holes where the lashings occurred. In a few minutes it hardened, and the boys surveyed their work with pride and satisfaction.

"Now we'll try un," said David, "and see if she leaks."

"She'll never leak where she's mended," asserted Andy.

They slipped the boat into the water and Andy's prediction proved true. Not a drop of water oozed through the joints, and the boat was as snug and tight and seaworthy as any boat that ever floated.

"'Tis too late to start to-night," said David, "but we'll be away at crack o' dawn in the marnin', whatever. 'Tis fine they left the sail and oars."

And at crack of dawn in the morning the boys were away. The day was misty and disagreeable, but David and Andy knew the way as well as you

and I know our city streets. They rounded the Devil's Arm, a friendly tide helped them through the narrows, and in mid-forenoon the low white buildings of Fort Pelican appeared in misty outline through the fog. A few minutes later they swung alongside the Fort Pelican jetty, and there, to their amazement, firmly tied to the jetty, lay their own big boat.

No one about the Post could explain whence the boat had come or how it reached the jetty. The Post servants stated that they had not noticed it until after the departure of the lumber steamer. They had recognized it as Thomas Angus' boat, for in that country men know each other's boats as our country folk know their neighbours' horses.

The lumber ship had arrived on the morning of the gale, and had anchored in the harbour awaiting the arrival of one of the company's officers on the mail boat. The mail boat had arrived the previous morning, and both the mail boat and lumber ship had steamed away shortly after the mail boat's arrival. Many lumbermen had been ashore. If any of them had come in the boat they had mingled among the others and had departed either on the lumber ship, which had gone up the Bay to Grampus River, or on the mail boat to Newfoundland.

"I'm thinkin'," said David, "whoever 'twere took Lem's silver fox and our boat went to Newfoundland to sell the fur."

"The's no doubtin' *that*," agreed Andy.

VIII

TRAILING THE HALF-BREED

ELI HORN paused in the enclosed porch to shoulder his provision pack, left there upon his arrival home earlier in the evening. He was passing from the porch when Doctor Joe opened the door.

"Eli," said Doctor Joe, closing the door behind him, "may I have a word with you?"

"Aye, sir," and Eli stopped.

"I just wished to speak a word of warning," said Doctor Joe quietly. "Be cautious, Eli, and do nothing you'll regret. Don't be too hasty. We suspect Indian Jake, but none of us know certainly that he shot your father or took the silver fox skin."

"The's no doubtin' he took un! Pop says he took un, and he knows. I'm goin' to get the silver if I has to kill Injun Jake."

Eli spoke in even, quiet tones, but with the dogged determination of the man trained to pit his powers of endurance against Nature and the wilderness. He gave no suggestion of boastfulness, but rather of the man who has an ordinary

duty to perform, and is bent upon doing it to the best of his ability.

"Don't you think you had better wait and start in the morning? It's a nasty night to be out," Doctor Joe suggested. "'Twill be hard to make your way to-night with the wind against you as well as the dark. If you wait until morning it will give us time to talk things over."

"I'll not stop till I gets the silver," Eli stubbornly declared, "and I'll get un or kill Injun Jake."

"See here, Eli," Doctor Joe laid his hand on Eli's arm, "your father says he was not shot until sundown. Indian Jake was at our camp at Flat Point within the hour after sundown. He never could have paddled that distance against a down wind in an hour. The boys and I were four hours coming over here from Flat Point Camp, and I know Indian Jake could not have covered the distance in anything like an hour."

"'Twere some trick of his! He shot un and he took the silver!" Eli insisted. "Good-bye, sir. I've got to be goin' or he'll slip away from me."

"Be careful, Eli," Doctor Joe pleaded. "Don't shoot unless you're forced to do so to protect yourself."

"'Twill be Injun Jake'll have to be careful," returned Eli as he strode away in the darkness, and Doctor Joe knew that Eli had it in his heart to do murder.

The night was pitchy black and a drizzling rain was falling, but Eli had often travelled on as dark nights, and he was determined. He chose a light skiff rigged with a leg-o'-mutton sail. The wind was against him and with the sail reefed and the mast unstepped and stowed in the bottom of the boat, he slipped a pair of oars into the locks and with strong, even strokes pulled away, hugging the shore, that he might take advantage of the lee of the land.

Presently the drizzle became a downpour, but Eli, oblivious to wind and weather, rowed tirelessly on. There was a dangerous turn to be made around Flat Point. Here for a time he lost the friendly shelter of the land, and continuous and tremendous effort was called for in the rough seas; but, guided by the roar of the breakers on the shore, he compassed it and presently fell again under the protection of the land.

With all his effort Eli had not progressed a quarter of the distance toward The Jug when dawn broke. With the first light he made a safe landing, cut a stick of standing dead timber, chopped off the butt, and splitting it that he might get at the dry core, whittled some shavings and lighted a fire. His provision bag was well filled. No Labradorman travels otherwise. A kettle of hot tea sweetened with molasses, a pan of fried fat pork and some hard bread (hardtack) satisfied his hunger.

The wind was rising and the rain was flying in blinding sheets, but the shore still protected him, and the moment his simple breakfast was eaten Eli again set forward. Presently, however, another long point projected out into the Bay to force him into the open. He turned about in his boat and for several minutes studied the white-capped seas beyond the point.

"I'll try un," he muttered, and settled again to his oars.

But try as he would Eli could not force his light craft against the wind and at length he reluctantly dropped back again under the lee of the land and went ashore.

"There'll be no goin' on to-day," he admitted. "I'll have to make camp *what*ever."

Under the shelter of the thick spruce forest where he was fended from the gale and drive of the rain, he cut a score of poles. One of them, thicker and stiffer than the others, he lashed between two trees at a height of perhaps four feet. At intervals of three or four inches he rested the remaining poles against the one lashed to the trees, arranging them at an angle of fifty-five degrees and aligning the butts of the poles evenly upon the ground. These he covered with a mass of boughs and marsh grass as a thatching. The roof thatched to his satisfaction, he broke a quantity of boughs and with some care prepared a bed under the lean-to.

His shelter and bed completed, he cut and piled a quantity of dry logs at one end of the lean-to. Then he felled two green trees and cut the trunks into four-foot lengths. Two of these he placed directly in front of the shelter and two feet apart, at right angles to the shelter. Across the ends of the logs farthest from his bed he piled three of the green sticks to serve as a backlog, and in front of these lighted his fire. When it was blazing freely he piled upon it, and in front of the green backlogs, several of the logs of dry wood.

Despite the rain, the fire burned freely, and presently the interior of Eli's lean-to was warm and comfortable. He now removed his rain-soaked jacket and moleskin trousers and suspended them from the ridge-pole, where they would receive the benefit of the heat and gradually dry.

Stripped to his underclothing, Eli crouched before the fire beneath the front of the shelter. At intervals he turned his back and sides and chest toward the heat and in the course of an hour succeeded in drying his underclothing to his satisfaction. His moleskin trousers were still damp, but he donned them, and renewing the fire he stretched himself luxuriously for a long and much needed rest.

IX

ELI SURPRISES INDIAN JAKE

WHEN Eli awoke late in the afternoon the rain had ceased, but the wind was blowing a living gale. There was a roar and boom and thunder of breakers down on the point and echoing far away along the coast. The wind shrieked and moaned through the forest.

Under his shelter beneath the thick spruce trees, however, Eli was well enough protected. He renewed the fire, which had burned to embers, and prepared dinner. The storm that prevented him from travelling would also hold Indian Jake a prisoner. This thought yielded him a degree of satisfaction.

He took no advantage of the leisure to reconsider and weigh the circumstantial evidence against Indian Jake. He had accepted it as conclusive proof of the half-breed's guilt and he had already convicted him of the crime. Once Eli had arrived at a conclusion his mind was closed to any line of reasoning that might tend to controvert that conclusion. He prided himself upon this characteristic as strength of will, while in reality it was a weakness. But Eli was like many another man

who has enjoyed greater opportunities in the world than ever fell to Eli's lot.

Once Eli had set himself upon a trail he never turned his back upon the object he sought or weakened in his determination to attain it. His object now was to overtake Indian Jake and have the matter out with the half-breed once and for all. Well directed, this trait of unyielding determination is an excellent one. It is the foundation of success in life if the object sought is a worthy one. But in this instance Eli's objective was not alone the recovery of the silver fox skin, though this was the chief incentive. Coupled with it was a desire for vengeance, prompted by hate, and vengeance is the child of the weakest and meanest of human passions.

When Eli had eaten he shouldered his rifle and strolled back into the forest. Presently he flushed a covey of spruce grouse, which rose from the ground and settled in a tree. Flinging his rifle to his shoulder, he fired and a grouse tumbled to the ground. He fired again, and another fell. The living birds, with a great noise of wings, now abandoned the tree and Eli picked up the two victims. He had clipped their heads off neatly. This he observed with satisfaction. His rifle shot true and his aim was steady. What chance could Indian Jake have against such skill as that?

Eli plucked the birds immediately, while they were warm, for delay would set the feathers, and

his game being sufficient for his present needs, he returned to his bivouac on the point.

It was mid-afternoon the following day before the wind and rain had so far subsided as to permit Eli to turn the point and proceed upon his journey. Even then, with all his effort, the progress he made against the northwest breeze was so slow that it was not until the following forenoon that he reached The Jug. Thomas saw him coming and was on the jetty to welcome him.

"How be you, Eli?" Thomas greeted. "I'm wonderful glad to see you. Come right up and have a cup o' tea."

"How be you, Thomas? Is Injun Jake here?"

"He were here," said Thomas, "but he only stops one day to help me get the outfit ready and then he goes on in his canoe to hunt bear up the Nascaupee River whilst he waits there for me to go to the Seal Lake trails. You want to see he?"

"Aye, and I'm goin' to see *what*ever!"

While Eli had a snack to eat and a cup of tea with Thomas and Margaret he told Thomas of Indian Jake's call upon his father, of the shooting and of the robbery which followed.

"Injun Jake turns back after leavin' and shoots Pop and takes the silver," he concluded, "and I'm goin' to get the silver *what*ever, even if I has to shoot Injun Jake to get un!"

"Is you sure, now, 'twere Injun Jake does un?" asked Thomas, unwilling to believe his friend and

partner capable of such treachery, and by disposition Thomas was naturally cautious of passing judgment or of accusing any one of misdeed without conclusive proof.

"The's no doubtin' that!" insisted Eli. "There was nobody else to do un. 'Twere Injun Jake."

A shift of wind to the southward assisted Eli on his way. Early that evening he reached the Hudson's Bay Company's post, twenty miles west of The Jug. Here he stopped for supper and learned from Zeke Hodge, the Post servant, that Indian Jake had passed up Grand Lake in his canoe two days before. Zeke expressed doubt as to Eli's finding the half-breed at the Nascaupee River. He stated it as his opinion that if Indian Jake were guilty of the crime, as he had no doubt, he was planning an escape and had in all probability immediately plunged into the interior, in which case he was already hopelessly beyond pursuit and had fled the Bay country for good and all. Like Eli, Zeke convicted the half-breed at once.

The Eskimo Bay Post of the Hudson's Bay Company is the last inhabited dwelling as the traveller enters the wilderness, and he might go on and on for a thousand miles to Hudson Bay and in the whole vast expanse of distance no other human habitation will he find. His camps will be pitched in the depths of forests or on desolate, naked barrens; and forever, in forests or on barrens, he will hear the rush and roar of mighty rivers or the lap-

ping waves of wide, far-reaching lakes. The timber wolf will startle him from sleep in the dead of night with its long, weird howl, rising and falling in dismal cadence, or the silence will be broken perchance by the wild, uncanny laugh of the loon falling upon the darkness as a token of ill omen, but in all the vast land he will hear no human voice and he will find no human companionship.

Indian Jake had told Thomas that he would camp above the mouth of the Nascaupee River, a dozen miles beyond the point where the river enters Grand Lake. It was a journey of sixty miles or more from the Post.

Eli set out at once. Five miles up a short wide river brought him to Grand Lake, which here reached away before him to meet the horizon in the west, and at the foot of the lake he camped to await day, for the lake and the country before him were unfamiliar.

Early in the afternoon of the third day after leaving the Post, Eli's boat turned into the wide mouth of the Nascaupee River, and keeping a sharp lookout, he rowed silently up the river. It was an hour before sundown when his eye caught the white of canvas among the trees a little way from the river.

With much caution Eli drew his boat among the willows that lined the bank and made it fast. Slinging his cartridge bag over his shoulder, and with his rifle resting in the hollow of his arm,

ready for instant action, he crept forward toward Indian Jake's camp. Taking advantage of the cover of brush, he moved with extreme caution until he had the tent and surroundings under observation.

There was no movement about the camp and the fire was dead. It was plain Indian Jake had not returned for the evening. Eli crouched and waited, as a cat crouches and waits patiently for its prey.

Presently there was the sound of a breaking twig and a moment later Indian Jake, with his rifle on his arm, appeared out of the forest.

Eli, his rifle levelled at Indian Jake, rose to his feet with the command:

"You stand where you is; drop your gun!"

"Why, how do, Eli! What's up?" Indian Jake greeted. "What's bringin' you to the Nascaupee?"

"You!" Eli's face was hard with hate. "'Tis you brings me here, you thief! I wants the silver you takes when you shoots father, and 'tis well for you Doctor Joe comes and saves he from dyin' or I'd been droppin' a bullet in your heart with nary a warnin'!"

"What you meanin' by that?"

"Be you givin' up the silver?"

"No!"

"I say again, give me that silver fox you stole from father!"

Indian Jake's small hawk eyes were narrowing. He made no answer, but slipped his right hand forward toward the trigger of his rifle, though the barrel of the rifle still rested in the hollow of his left arm.

"Drop un!" Eli commanded, observing the movement. "Drop that gun on the ground!"

Indian Jake stood like a statue, eyeing Eli, but he made no movement.

"I said drop un!" Eli's voice was cold and hard as steel. He was in deadly earnest. "If you tries to raise un, or don't drop un before I count ten I'll put a bullet in your heart!"

Indian Jake might have been of chiselled stone. He did not move a muscle or wink an eyelash, but his small eyes were centered on every motion Eli made. He still held his rifle, the barrel resting in the hollow of his left arm, his right hand clutching the stock behind the hammer, his finger an inch from the trigger.

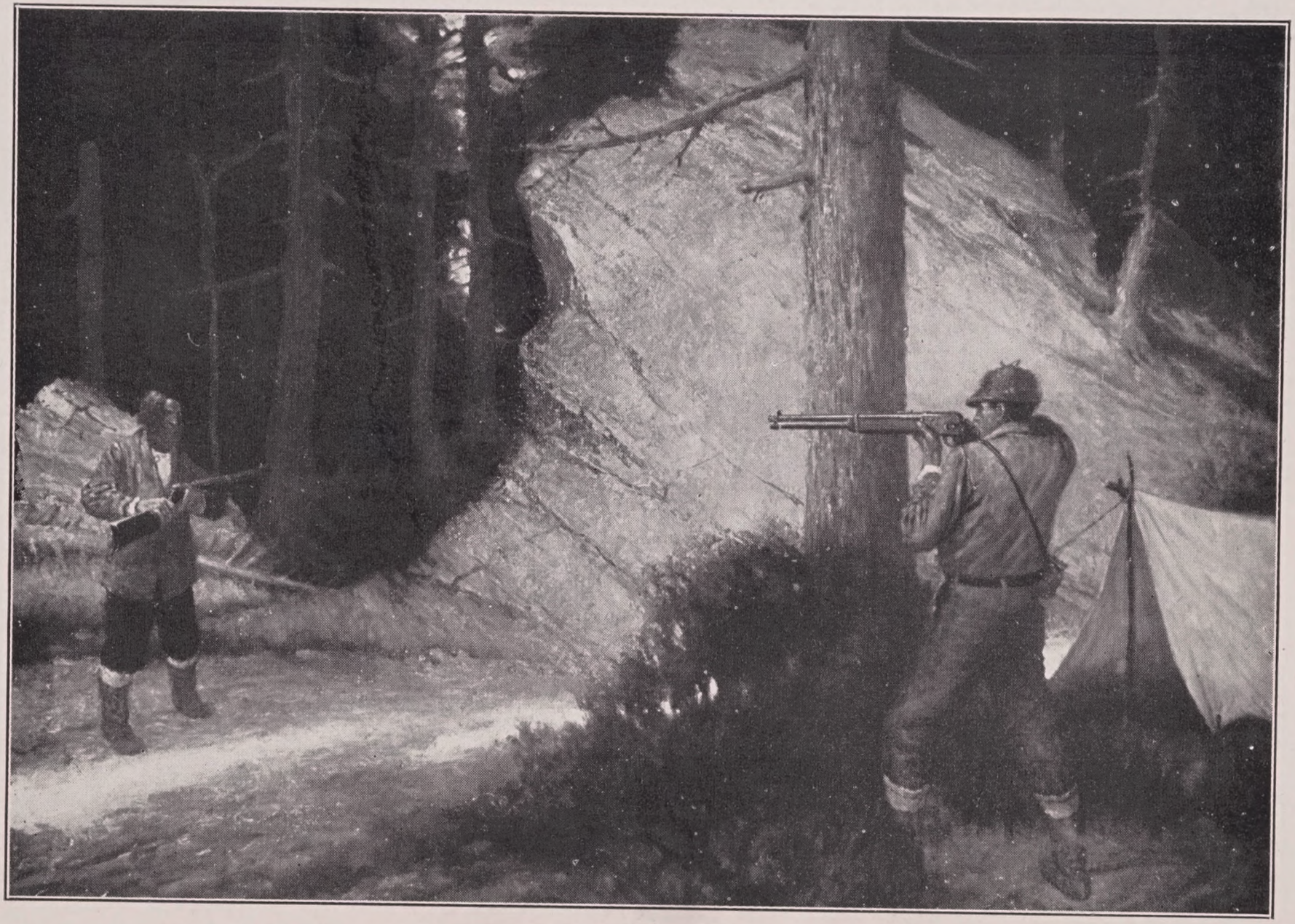
For an instant there was a death-like silence, then Eli began to count:

"One—two—three—four ——"

The words fell like strokes of a hammer upon an anvil. Eli intended to shoot. He was a man of his word. He made no threat that he was not prepared to execute, and Indian Jake knew that Eli would shoot on the count of ten.

"Five—six—seven—eight ——"

Still Indian Jake made no move save that the



"YOU STAND WHERE YOU IS AND DROP YOUR GUN"

little hawk eyes had narrowed to slits. He did not drop his gun. From all the indications, he did not hear Eli's count.

"Nine—ten!"

True to his threat, Eli's rifle rang out with the last word of his count.

X

THE END OF ELI'S HUNT

INDIAN JAKE, quick as a cat, had thrown himself upon the ground with Eli's last count. Like the loon that dives at the flash of the hunter's gun, he was a fraction of a second quicker than Eli. Now, lying prone, his rifle at his shoulder, he had Eli covered, and the chamber of Eli's rifle was empty.

"Drop that gun!" he commanded.

Eli, believing in the first instant that Indian Jake had fallen as the result of the shot, was taken wholly by surprise. He stood dazed and dumb with the smoking rifle in his hand. He did not at once realize that the half-breed had him covered. His brain did not work as rapidly as Indian Jake's. His immediate sensation as he heard Indian Jake's voice was one of thankfulness that, after all, there was no stain of murder on his soul. Even yet he had no doubt Indian Jake was wounded. He had taken deadly aim, and he could not understand how any escape could have been possible.

"Drop that gun!" Indian Jake repeated. "I won't count. I'll shoot."

Eli's brain at last grasped the situation. Indian

Jake was grinning broadly, and it seemed to Eli the most malicious grin he had ever beheld. He did not question Indian Jake's determination to shoot. It was too evident that the half-breed, grinning like a demon, was in a desperate mood. Eli dropped his rifle as though it were red hot and burned his hands.

"Step out here!" Indian Jake, rising to his feet, indicated an open space near the tent.

Eli did as he was told.

"Shake the ca'tridges out of your bag on the ground!"

Eli turned his cartridge bag over, and the cartridges which it contained rattled to the ground.

"Turn your pockets out!"

A turning of the pockets disclosed no further ammunition.

Indian Jake took Eli's rifle from the ground, emptied the magazine, and placed the rifle in the tent.

"Where's your boat?" he asked.

"Just down here."

"You go ahead. Show me."

Eli guided Indian Jake to the boat, and while he remained on the bank under threat of the rifle, the half-breed went through his belongings in the boat in a further search for ammunition. Satisfied that there was none, he replaced the things as he had found them, and was grinning amiably when he rejoined Eli upon the bank.

"Come 'long up to camp," he invited, quite as though Eli were a most welcome guest.

"Give me that silver fox!" Eli's anger had mastered his surprise.

"I won't give un to you, but don't be mad, Eli," Indian Jake grinned in vast enjoyment.

"You stole un!" Eli burst out. "And you were thinkin' to do murder!"

"Did I now?"

"You did!"

Indian Jake did not deign to deny or confess. Eli, at his command, returned to camp. Indian Jake handed him the teakettle.

"Fill un at the river," he directed.

While Eli obeyed silently and sullenly, Indian Jake lighted a fire, and when Eli returned put the kettle on. Then he brought forth his frying-pan, filled it with sliced venison, and as he placed it over the fire, remarked:

"Knocked a buck down this mornin'."

Eli said nothing. The odour of frying venison was pleasant. Eli was hungry, and when the venison was fried and tea made, he swallowed his pride and silently accepted Indian Jake's invitation to eat.

When they had finished, Indian Jake cut a large joint of venison, and presented it to Eli with his empty rifle, remarking as he did so:

"The deer's meat's a surprise. I like to surprise folks. Taste good goin' home. I'll keep the

ca'tridges. You might hurt somebody if you had un. You'll get quite a piece down before you camp to-night."

"Were you takin' that silver?" asked Eli, changing his accusation to a question.

"Maybe I were and maybe I weren't," Indian Jake grinned. "'Twouldn't do me any good to tell you if I had un, and if I told you I didn't have un you wouldn't believe me. Maybe I've got un. You better be goin'. I'd ask you to stay, Eli, and I'd like to have you, but you don't like me and you'd better go on."

"I don't want the deer's meat," said Eli in sullen resentment.

"You ain't got any ca'tridges, and you can't shoot any fresh meat," insisted Indian Jake, adding with a grin: "She'll go good. Take un along, I got plenty. It's just a little surprise present for you bein' so kind as not to shoot me."

Eli, doubtless deciding that he had better take what he could get, though a bit of venison was small compensation for a silver fox, accepted the meat. Indian Jake accompanied him to the boat, and as he dropped down the river he could see Indian Jake still on the bank watching him until he turned a bend.

Without cartridges for his rifle, Eli felt himself as helpless as a wolf without teeth or a cat without claws. He was subdued and humbled. He had had Indian Jake completely in his power, and

through delay in taking prompt advantage of his position, had permitted the half-breed to capture and disarm him.

The thought increased his anger toward Indian Jake. He had no doubt the man had the silver fox in his possession. If there had been any doubt in the first instance that Indian Jake was guilty, and Eli had never admitted that there was doubt, he was now entirely satisfied of the half-breed's guilt. Indian Jake, indeed, had quite boldly stated that he "might" have it, and Eli accepted this as an admission that he *did* have it.

"There'll be no use gettin' more ca'tridges and goin' back," Eli mused. "He's had a warnin' and he'll not bide in that camp another day. He'll flee the country."

Then Eli's thoughts turned to his old father and mother.

"The silver's gone, and it leaves Pop and Mother in a bad way," he mused. "They've been fondlin' that skin half the winter. Pop's had un out a hundred times to see how fine and black 'twere, and shook un out to see how thick and deep the fur is. And they been countin' and countin' on the things they'd be gettin' and needs, and can't get now she's gone. And they been countin' on the money they'd have to lay by for their feeble days when they needs un. They'll never get over mournin' the loss of un. 'Twere worth a fortune, and Pop'll never cotch another. He were hopin'

and hopin' every year as long as I remembers to cotch a silver, and none ever comes to his traps till this un comes. And now she's gone!"

Perhaps had the silver fox skin been Eli's own, and perhaps had his father and mother not built so many hopes and laid so many plans upon the little fortune it was to have brought them, Eli would never have ventured to the verge of murder to recover it. Even now, with all his regrets, he thanked God from the bottom of his heart that he had not killed Indian Jake and stained his hands with blood.

"'Twere the mercy of God sent the bullet abroad," said he reverently. "Indian Jake's a thief and he deserves to be killed, but if I'd killed he I'd never rested an easy hour again while I lives.

"But I might o' clipped his trigger hand, *whatever*," he thought with regret. "I can clip off the head of a pa'tridge every time, and I might have clipped his hand, and got the skin and took he back for Doctor Joe to fix up."

Three days later Eli pulled his boat wearily into The Jug. The boys had returned, and with Thomas they met him on the jetty.

"Did you find Injun Jake?" Thomas asked anxiously.

"Aye," said Eli, "he were there."

Eli volunteered no further details for a moment. Then he added:

"I didn't kill he, thank the Lard, but he's got the silver. He said he had un, and he took my ca'tridges away from me."

"Said he had un? Now, that's strange—wonderful strange. Come in, Eli, supper's ready," Thomas invited, manifestly relieved that Eli had not succeeded in accomplishing his rash purpose. "You'll bide the night with us, and while you eats tell us about un, and the lads'll tell what were happenin' to they."

Margaret was setting the table. She greeted Eli cordially, and arranged a plate for him while he washed at the basin behind the stove.

"Come," invited Thomas, "set in. We've got a wonderful treat."

"What be that, now?" asked Eli as Margaret placed a dish of steaming, mealy boiled potatoes upon the table.

"Potaters," Thomas announced grandly. "Doctor Joe brings un on the mail boat from where he's been, and onions, too. Margaret, peel some onions and set un on for Eli. They's fine just as they is without cookin'."

The onions came, and when thanks had been offered Eli tasted his first potato.

"They is fine, now! Wonderful fine eatin'," he declared.

"Try an onion, now. They's fine, too," Thomas urged.

Eli took an onion.

"She has a strange smell," he observed before biting into it.

Eli took a liberal mouthful of the onion. He began to chew it. A strained look spread over his face. Tears filled his eyes. But Eli was brave, and he never flinched.

"'Tis fine, I likes un wonderful fine," Eli volunteered presently, adding, "if she didn't burn so bad."

"Take just a bit at a time," advised Thomas, laughing heartily, "and eat un with bread or potaters and you won't notice the burn of un."

Presently Eli told of his experiences with Indian Jake, and Andy told of the tracks he had seen under the window, and all of the boys told of what had happened on the island, the theft of the boat, the tracks of the nailed boots and the discovery of the boat at Fort Pelican.

Then Eli made an announcement that again laid the burden of suspicion more strongly than ever upon Indian Jake.

"I were workin' at the lumber camps a week this summer helpin' they out," said Eli. "Whilst I were there Indian Jake comes and trades a pair of skin boots with one of the lumber men for a pair of their boots, the kind with nails in un. He the same as says he has the fur, and 'twere he took un."

"Injun Jake wears skin boots when he come to our camp on Flat P'int," said David.

"Aye, 'tis likely," admitted Eli. "He'd be

wearin' skin boots in the canoe, whatever. The nailed boots would be hard on the canoe. He uses the nailed boots trampin' about, but he'd change un when he travels in his canoe."

The whole question was canvassed pro and con, and due consideration given to the length of time that Indian Jake must have consumed in passing from Horn's Bight to Flat Point. This was alone sufficient in the mind of Thomas and the boys to lift all suspicion from Indian Jake, but Eli still held stubbornly to the opposite view.

Two days later, and on the eve of Thomas's departure for the trails, Doctor Joe returned. Lem had so far recovered that a further stay at Horn's Bight was unnecessary.

Thomas and Doctor Joe quietly discussed the shooting incident. Lem, it appeared, had later decided that he may have been shot much earlier in the afternoon than sundown. What had occurred had fallen into the hazy uncertainty of a dream.

"What kind of a rifle does Indian Jake use?" asked Doctor Joe.

"A thirty-eight fifty-five," said Thomas.

Doctor Joe drew from his pocket the bullet extracted from Lem's wound. Thomas examined it critically.

"There's no doubtin' 'tis a thirty-eight fifty-five," he admitted. "'Tis true Injun Jake gets a pair of nailed boots like the lumber folk wears. But Injun Jake'll tell me whether 'twere he shot

Lem. Injun Jake'll be fair about un with *me whatever*. 'Tis hard for me to believe he did un. If he did, he'll be gone from the Nascaupee when I gets there. If he didn't, I'll find he waitin'!"

"Let us hope he'll be there, and let us hope he's innocent," said Doctor Joe.

Some day and in some way every sin is punished and every criminal is discovered. It is an immutable law of God that he who does wrong must atone for the wrong. We do not always know how the punishment is brought about, but the guilty one knows. And so with the shooting and robbery of Lem Horn. Many months were to pass before the mystery was to be solved, and then the revelation was to come in a startling manner in the course of an adventure amid the deep snows of winter.

Thomas sailed away the following morning. They watched his boat pass down through The Jug and out into the Bay, and then the silence of the wilderness closed upon him, and no word came as to whether or no Indian Jake met him at the Nascaupee River camp.

XI

THE LETTER IN THE CAIRN

IN Labrador September is the pleasantest month of the year. It is a period of calm when fogs and mists and cold dreary rains, so frequent during July and the early half of August, are past, and Nature holds her breath before launching upon the world the bitter blasts and blizzards and awful cold of a sub-arctic winter. There are days and days together when the azure of the sky remains unmarred by clouds, and the sun shines uninterruptedly. The air, brilliantly transparent, carries a twang of frost. Evening is bathed in an effulgence of colour. The sky flames in startling reds and yellows blending into opals and turquoise, with the shadowy hills lying in a purple haze in the west.

Then comes night and the aurora. Wavering fingers of light steal up from the northern horizon. Higher and higher they climb until they have reached and crossed the zenith. From the north they spread to the east and to the west until the whole sky is aflame with shimmering fire of marvellous changing colours varying from darkest purple to dazzling white.

The dark green of the spruce and balsam forests is splotched with golden yellow where the magic touch of the frost king has laid his fingers and worked a miracle upon groves of tamaracks. The leaves of the aspen and white birch have fallen, and the flowers have faded.

Spruce grouse chickens, full grown now, rise in coveys with much noise of wing, and perch in trees looking down unafraid upon any who intrudes upon their forest home. Ptarmigans, still in their coat of mottled brown and white, gather in flocks upon the naked hills to feed, where upland cranberries cover the ground in red masses; or on the edge of marshes where bake apple berries have changed from brilliant red to delicate salmon pink and offer a sweet and wholesome feast.

The honk and quack of wild geese and ducks, southward bound in great flocks, disturbs the silence of every inlet and cove and bight, where the wild fowl pause for a time to rest and feed upon the grasses.

After Thomas's departure Doctor Joe and the boys tidied and snugged things up for the winter, and many a fine hunt they had, mornings and evenings, in the edge of a near-by marsh through which a brook coursed to join the sea. Hunting geese and ducks was indeed a duty, for they must needs depend upon the hunt for no small share of their living. It was a duty they enjoyed, however. Skill and a steady hand and a quick eye are

necessary to success and they never failed to return with a full bag.

The weather was now cold enough to keep the birds sweet and fresh, and before September closed a full two score of fine fat geese were hanging in the enclosed lean-to shed with a promise of many good dinners in the future.

Between the hunting and the work about home there was no time to be dawdled vainly away. When there was nothing more pressing the wood-pile always stood suggestively near the door inviting attention and it was necessary to saw and split a vast deal of wood to keep the big box stove supplied, for it had a great maw and would develop a marvellous appetite when the weather grew cold.

No extended travelling was possible for Doctor Joe on his errands of mercy until the sea should freeze and dogs and sledge could be called into service. But during the fine September weather he and the boys made two short trips up the Bay, where there was ailing in some of the families.

In the course of these excursions they took occasion to visit Let-In-Cove, which lay just outside Grampus River, where the new lumber camps were situated, and also Snug Cove and Tuggle Bight, a little farther on. At Let-In-Cove Peter and Lige Sparks, at Snug Cove Obadiah Button and Micah Dunk, and at Tuggle Bight Seth Muggs were enlisted in the scout troop, and a Handbook left at

each place. These, indeed, with the three Anguses, were the only boys of scout age within a radius of fifty miles of The Jug.

There was great excitement among the lads, and Doctor Joe proudly declared that there would be no finer or more efficient troop of scouts in all the world than his little troop of eight when they had become familiar with their duties.

A new field and a broader vision of life was to open to these Labrador lads, whose life was of necessity circumscribed. They had never been given the opportunity to play as boys play in more favoured lands. They had never known the joys of baseball or basket-ball or the hundred other fine, health-giving games that are a part of the life of every American or Canadian boy. They had never seen a circus or a moving picture and they had never been in a schoolroom in their lives.

This opportunity to play and study as other boys play and study in other lands was the thing, perhaps, they longed for above all else. Doctor Joe had inspired them with ambition. They hungered to learn, and here was the Handbook with many things in it to study, and through Doctor Joe and the book they were to learn the joy of play.

The new recruits to the troop, however, as well as the Angus boys, had been close students of their native wilderness. Their eyes were sharp and their ears were quick. They knew every tree and flower and plant that grew about them. They knew the

birds and their calls and songs. They knew every animal, its cry and its habits of life. They knew the fish of the sea and lake and stream. All this was a part of their training for their future profession of hunters and fishermen.

As hunters they had not learned to look upon the wild things of the woods as friends and associates. To them the animals were only beasts whose valuable pelts could be traded at the post for necessaries of life or whose flesh was good to eat. Success in life depended upon man's ability to outwit and slay birds or animals and the lads held for them none of the human sympathy that would have added so much to their own enjoyment.

Now they were to have a new view of life. Doctor Joe was to open to them a wider, happier vista. It was not in the least to breed in them discontent with their circumscribed life, but rather to open to their consciousness the opportunities that lay within their reach, and to make their life richer and broader and vastly more worth while.

Doctor Joe explained to the five recruits the Tenderfoot Scout requirements, much as he had explained them to David and Andy and Jamie. Wilderness dwellers who must take in and fix in the mind at a glance every unusual tree or stump or stone if they would find their trail, have a peculiar and remarkable gift of memory born of long practice and the fact that they must perforce depend upon their ability to retain the things they

see and hear. The lads, therefore, required no repetition, and learned their lessons with ease.

Though they had never attended school they could all read, stumbling, to be sure, over the big words, but nevertheless grasping the meaning. Doctor Joe, during his years in the Bay, had taught not only the Angus boys but many of the other young people to read. Doctor Joe now marked the pages that they were to study and before he and the Angus boys turned back across the Bay to The Jug it was agreed that the new troop should hold a week's camp to study and practice together. Hollow Cove, some five miles from The Jug, was to be the camping ground, and the first week in October was decided upon as the time.

"We'll start to camp on Monday marnin' of that week," suggested David. "Come over to The Jug on Sunday. 'Twill be fine to have us all go to camp together."

"Aye," agreed Micah, "'twill be now, and we'll come, and have a fine time."

"And we'll all study about the scout things whilst we're in camp," piped up Jamie enthusiastically.

"That we will now," David assured.

"Lige, you and Peter bring a tent and stove, and all you need for setting up camp," Doctor Joe directed. "Can you bring one, too, Seth?"

"Aye," said Seth, "I'll bring un, but we have no tent stove. Pop took un to the huntin'."

"Obadiah or Micah may bring a stove. You have one, haven't you?" Doctor Joe asked.

"Aye," said Obadiah, "I has one. I'll bring un along."

"You three fix up an outfit amongst you. There'll be three in a tent," Doctor Joe explained. "Andy can go in with Peter and Lige, and I'll tent with Davy and Jamie."

There was little else than the proposed camping expedition talked about on the return to The Jug. And in the days that followed David, Andy and Jamie devoted every spare moment to the study of first aid and signalling. Doctor Joe, with no end of patience, drilled them so thoroughly in first aid that they were soon really expert in applying bandages. He even instructed them in improvising splints and reducing fractures. In this secluded land, where for three hundred miles up and down the coast there was no other surgeon than Doctor Joe, it was not unlikely that some day they would be called upon to set a leg or an arm.

Doctor Joe was as ignorant, however, of the art of signalling as were the lads, and he must needs take it up from the very beginning and study with them. It was decided that they should learn both the semaphore and general service codes, and Doctor Joe insisted that neither he nor the lads should consider the Second Class test satisfactorily passed until they had not only learned the codes but could send and receive messages at the rate of speed

designated in the Handbook as required for the First Class test.

"It wouldn't be fair to the scouts in the big cities," he declared. "They have to learn a great many things that we already know how to do, like building fires, using the ax and knife and tracking. Those are things we've been doing all our lives and won't have to practice. We must make it just as hard for ourselves to become Second Class Scouts as it is for the city lads. So we'll make the signalling test that much more difficult."

"I'm thinkin' that's fine now," enthused David, "and when we learns un we'll know that much more."

"That's the idea!" said Doctor Joe. "And we'll not only learn the sixteen principal points of the compass, but we'll learn to box the compass to the quarter point as navigators do."

"I can box un now," grinned David.

"So can I box un!" Andy exclaimed. "Dad told me how, same as he told Davy."

"And I can learn to box un easy," promised Jamie.

Margaret joined them one fine day in the forest behind the cabin when they took their Second Class cooking test, and a jolly day they made of it. It was easy enough to roast a spruce grouse on the end of a stick. Even Jamie had done that many times. But Doctor Joe was called upon to solve the problem of cooking potatoes without cooking

utensils and he did it so satisfactorily that the lads practiced it every day afterward for a week.

He resorted to a simple and ordinary method. He dug a narrow trench about six inches deep. Upon this he built a fire, which he permitted to burn until there was a good accumulation of ashes. Then he pushed the fire back and raked the ashes out of the trench. The potatoes were now placed in a row at the bottom of the trench and covered with a good layer of hot ashes. The fire was now drawn back over the ashes that covered the potatoes and permitted to burn briskly.

At the end of an hour he brushed the fire back at one end sufficiently to allow a long slender splinter to be pushed down through the ashes and through a potato. The splinter did not penetrate the potato easily and the fire was drawn in again to burn for another quarter of an hour. Then it was raked out and the potatoes removed, to find that, while the skins were not in the least burned or even scorched, the potatoes were done to a turn.

"You couldn't have baked them better in your oven, Margaret," laughed Doctor Joe.

"I never could have baked un half as well," admitted Margaret, adding, "'Tis a wonderful way of cookin'."

"Doctor Joe's fine cookin' everything," declared Andy. "I always likes his cookin' wonderful well."

"Thank you, Andy. That's high praise,"

acknowledged Doctor Joe, "but I could learn a great deal about cooking from Margaret."

"I just does plain cookin'," Margaret deprecated, but flushed with pleasure at the compliment.

On the last day of September, which was a Friday, David and Doctor Joe crossed over to the Hudson's Bay Post and took Margaret with them for a visit with Kate Huddy, the Post servant's daughter, where she was to remain while the Scouts were enjoying their camp at Hollow Cove.

David and Doctor Joe returned to The Jug on Saturday, and when the other members of the troop arrived in a boat on Sunday, had their own tent equipment and food packed and ready for the little expedition on Monday morning.

It was a jolly meeting. The evening was cold, and when supper was eaten they gathered around the big box stove which crackled cheerfully, and Doctor Joe announced that as this was the first meeting of the troop they must organize and elect leaders, just as troops were organized everywhere else in the world.

When he had thoroughly explained the necessary steps he read to them a brief constitution and by-laws which he had previously prepared. These he had them adopt in due form, and then asked some one to nominate a patrol leader.

Every one, with one accord, nominated David, and he was duly, solemnly and unanimously elected.

"Now," suggested Doctor Joe, "we must have an assistant patrol leader. Who shall it be?"

"Andy," said Seth Muggs. "Andy's been to the trails and he knows more about un than anybody exceptin' Davy."

"'Twouldn't be fair," objected Andy. "Davy's patrol leader. 'Tis but right we put in one of you that comes from across the Bay. I'm sayin' Peter Sparks, now."

Doctor Joe agreed with Andy, and Peter Sparks was declared elected. Then Seth nominated Andy for scribe.

"Because," Seth explained, "Andy'll be right handy to Doctor Joe all the time and Doctor Joe can help he to do the writin', and he needs help."

When the election was completed Doctor Joe explained the duties of the officers and the necessity of obedience to them in the performance of scout duties.

"Our troop is a team," said Doctor Joe. "We must pull together. We are like a team of dogs hauling a komatik. If the dogs all follow the leader and pull together the best that ever they can they get somewhere. If they don't follow the leader, and one pulls in one direction and another pulls in a different direction and some don't pull at all they never get anywhere and aren't of much use. Our troop is going to be the best we can make it, by all pulling together and doing the very best we know how.

"We must always be ready to help other people at all times, as we promise to do in our oath. If we live up to that we'll do a great deal of good, first and last, up and down the Bay. If some one's life is in danger and we can help them even at the risk of our own we must help them. Everybody wants to be happy. There's nothing that will make us so happy as to do some fine thing every day that will make some one else happy.

"We must train our brains and our hands so that we shall always be prepared to do the right thing and do it quickly. We must learn to keep our temper and not get angry. Let us take the hard knocks that come to us with a smile."

The remainder of the evening was spent in playing some rollicking games that the lads had never heard of before, and which Doctor Joe taught them. There was the one-legged chicken fight, buzz, horse and rider and one or two others, as well as hand wrestling, though that they had seen the Indians play and had practiced themselves. They all declared that they had never in their lives had so much fun.

An early start the following morning brought them to Hollow Cove at ten o'clock. Hollow Cove was a fine natural harbour. A brook poured down through a gulch to empty into the Bay and near its mouth was an excellent landing-place. Not far from the brook, and a hundred feet back from the shore they pitched their tents in the shelter of the

spruce forest where the camp would be well protected from winds and storms.

While the others set up the sheet-iron stoves in the three tents and broke spruce boughs and laid the bough beds, David, Micah and Lige volunteered to cut wood.

"There's some fine dry wood just to the east'ard and close to shore," suggested David, as they picked up their axes. "It's right handy."

A dozen yards from the camp David suddenly stopped and exclaimed:

"What's that now?"

On a great sloping rock close to the shore but hidden by a jutting point from the place where they had landed was a recently made cairn of bowlders capped by a large flat stone.

"Somebody's been here!" said David as they hurried forward to examine the cairn.

"'Tis wonderful strange to pile stones that way," said Micah. "'Tis new made, too."

"Maybe it's a cache," suggested Lige, "but it's a rare small un. Look and see. 'Tis a strange place for a cache!"

David lifted the flat stone from the top and discovered beneath a small tin can. In the can was a folded paper. He removed the paper and unfolding it discovered a message written in a cramped, scrawling hand.

"Read un, Davy! Read un out loud! You reads writin' good!" said Lige, and David read:

" i cum and stayed 2 hour, and wood not stay no longer for i hed to go and did not see you comin any were. Then i gos to the rock were We Was the day We was hunting Wen We come here ferst time. Then i done this way. i Pases 20 Pases up To a Hackmatack Tree. it was north. then i Pases 40 Pases west To a round rock, Then i Pases 60 Pases south To a wite berch i use cumpus. Then i climes a spruce Tree and hangs it and it is out of site in the Branches. if You plays me Crookid look out, i wont Stand for no Crooked work and You know what i will do to anybody plays me Crooked. You no Were to put my haf of the Swag. So i can get it Wen i go to get it."

There was no signature.

" That's a strange un—wonderful strange," said David.

" Stranger'n anything I *ever* sees," declared Lige.

" Whatever is un all about? " asked Micah.

" That's the strangeness of un," said Lige.

" Let's show un to Doctor Joe," suggested David.

But Doctor Joe, when they broke in upon him a moment later, was as mystified as they.

" It looks," said he, " as though something had been cached and here are the directions for finding the cache. There's a threat in the letter, too, and that looks bad. It's a mystery, lads, we'll try to search out. It doesn't look right. Perhaps it's the clue to some crime."

" How can we search un out? " asked David

excitedly. "We're not knowin' the rock, and there's plenty of rocks hereabouts."

"That's true," admitted Doctor Joe. "Go and put the paper back as you found it, and we'll see what we can make out of it later."

The whole camp was excited and every one followed David back to the cairn when he returned to restore the letter to its place in the can.

"'Tis something somebody's tryin' to hide," suggested Peter.

"There's no doubtin' that," said David. "I'm thinkin' 'tis not right whatever 'tis."

"We'll get camp in shape and have our dinner and then try to solve the mystery," said Doctor Joe. "It is a real mystery, for no one would make an ordinary cache in this way, and if it was an honest matter there would be no threat."

XII

THE HIDDEN CACHE

WHEN camp was made snug and dinner disposed of, Doctor Joe followed the boys down to the cairn. A careful examination was made of the soil surrounding the rock upon which the cairn was built, and in loose gravel close to the shore were found the imprints of feet. It was evident, however, that rain had fallen since the tracks were made, for they were so nearly washed away that there could be no certainty whether they were made by moccasins or nailed boots.

"'Twere a week ago they were here *what*ever," observed David, rising upon his feet after a close scrutiny upon hands and knees. "I'm thinkin' we'll see no sign of un now to help us trail un to the rock the writin' tells about."

"The ground was hard froze a week ago just as 'tis now," said Lige. "They'd be leavin' no tracks on froze ground."

"They makes the tracks that shows here whether the ground were froze or not," observed Seth.

"The gravel were loose and dry so 'tweren't

froze," explained Lige, "but away from the dry gravel 'twere all froze, and they'd make no tracks to show. Leastways that's how I thinks about un."

"That's good logic," said Doctor Joe. "I'm afraid we'll have to find the rock without the assistance of any tracks to guide us. There will surely be other signs, however, and we'll look for them while we look for the rock."

"Suppose now we scatters and looks up along the brook and along the ridge for the rock the pacin' were done from," suggested Andy. "'Tis like to be a different lookin' rock from most of un around here or they wouldn't have picked un."

"And 'tis like to be a big un too," volunteered Micah. "They'd be pickin' no little rock for that, *what*ever. I'm thinkin' 'twill be easy to know un if we sees un."

"Yes," agreed Doctor Joe, "the rock is probably larger or in some other way noticeably different from the others. It may be along the brook, or it may not. They were hunting. It may be a rock where they camped, or where they agreed to meet after their hunt, and probably where they boiled their kettle."

"They weren't Bay folk, *what*ever," asserted David. "The writin' ain't like any of the Bay folkses writin'. None of un here could write so fine."

"None of the Bay folk would be hidin' things

that way either," said Andy. "If 'twere anything small enough to hide in a tree they'd been takin' un with un and not leavin' un behind. If 'twere too big to carry, they'd just left un in a cache and come back for un when they gets ready and not do any writin' about un."

"I think you are right, Andy," agreed Doctor Joe. "For the reasons you give and for still other reasons I feel very certain strangers to the Bay left the cache."

"What were they meanin' by 'swag,' Doctor Joe?" asked Andy. "I never hears *that* word before. 'Tis a wonderful strange word."

"It usually means," explained Doctor Joe, "something that has been stolen. The use of that word is one of the reasons that leads me to conclude that it was not written by any of our people of the Bay. I am quite sure none of them knows what the word means, and like you I doubt if any of them ever heard it. There seems no doubt, indeed, that strangers to these parts wrote it, and as there are no other strangers in the Bay than the lumbermen, we are safe in concluding that the cairn was built and the note written by some one from the lumber camp at Grampus River."

"'Swag' is a wonderful strange soundin' word, now," said David. "I never hears un before."

"I'm thinkin' I knows what 'tis they hid now!" exclaimed Andy suddenly. "'Tis *Lem Horn's silver!* 'Tis the men hid un that shot Lem and

stole the silver! 'Tweren't Indian Jake shot Lem at all! 'Twere men from the lumber camp! What they calls 'swag' is Lem's silver!"

"That's what 'tis, now! 'Tis sure Lem Horn's silver!" David exploded excitedly. "I never would have thought of un bein' that! Andy's wonderful spry thinkin' things out, and he's mostly always right, too!"

"And Indian Jake never stole un! He never stole un!" Jamie burst out joyfully. "I were knowin' all the time he wouldn't steal un! Indian Jake wouldn't go shootin' folk and stealin' from un!"

"It may be," said Doctor Joe. "At any rate it seems extremely probable the 'swag' as they call it is stolen property that has been hidden. That word and the threat together with the other circumstances make it quite certain, indeed, that whatever it is they refer to was stolen. That's a safe conclusion to begin with. We have decided that we may be quite sure, also, that the men that hid the cache so carefully were none of our own Bay people, but men from the lumber camp. We have heard of nothing else than Lem Horn's silver fox having been stolen in the Bay. We have some ground, therefore, to suppose that the 'swag' is Lem Horn's silver fox. It will be a fine piece of work to search out the cache, and if it proves to contain Lem's silver fox, recover it for him. We will be doing a good turn to Lem and

at the same time will lift suspicion from Indian Jake. If we find the cache and there is nothing in it that should not be there, we will not interfere with it. Now how shall we go about it to trace it? Let's hear what you chaps think is the best plan."

"We'll separate and look for the rock they tells about," suggested David. "There's like to be some signs so we'll know un when we sees un. If we finds the rock 'twill not be hard to pace off the way they says in the paper."

"And we'll be lookin' out for other signs," added Peter. "'Tis likely they've been cuttin' wood or breakin' twigs or makin' a fire."

"The brook ain't froze, and I'm thinkin' now they been walkin' there and leavin' tracks, if they were goin' for water, and 'tis likely they were gettin' water to boil the kettle," reasoned Seth.

"Suppose," suggested Doctor Joe, "two of you follow up the brook, one on either side, and the rest of us will spread out on each side of the two following the brook, and look for the rock and other signs that will guide us."

"We better make a writin' for each of us just like the writin' in the can with what it says about how to find the cache if we finds the rock," suggested Andy. "I for one'll never be rememberin' all of un without a writin' to look at whatever."

"That's true, Andy," agreed Doctor Joe, "and none of us would."

"Andy always thinks of things like that!" exclaimed David admiringly.

"Get the paper from the can and bring it up to camp," directed Doctor Joe. "We'll make several copies of the directions. I have paper and pencil there in the tent."

David lifted the flat stone from the top of the cairn, and removing the paper he and the others followed Doctor Joe to his tent, where Doctor Joe made nine copies of the explicit directions, one for himself and one for each of the lads.

"You had better return this now to the can," said Doctor Joe, handing the paper back to David, "for if it should prove after all that we have been mistaken, and that the cache does not contain Lem's silver fox or other stolen property, it would be wrong, and we would not wish, to interfere with the man for whom this paper was left here finding the cache."

"'Twould be fair wicked to do that," agreed David. "I'll put un back."

When the paper had again been returned to its hiding-place Doctor Joe detailed the boys to their different positions. David and Peter were to follow the brook, David on the left side and Peter on the right side as they ascended. Seth Muggs, Obadiah Button, Andy and Jamie were to spread out at intervals on the left from David, and Lige Sparks, Micah Dunk and Doctor Joe on the right side of the brook from Peter. All were to ascend

through the woods at the same time, keeping a sharp lookout to right and to left for any unusual rock or other possible signs that might lead to a clue.

"Now we had better keep close enough together to keep in sight the man nearest us on the side toward the brook," directed Doctor Joe. "If we spread farther apart than that we will be too far apart to see any rock that may be between us."

"Aye, and we'll keep lookin' both ways," said Andy. "That way we can't miss un."

"It's now," Doctor Joe consulted his watch, "one-thirty o'clock. It's cloudy and it will be dark by half-past four. I'll call to Micah at half-past three and he will pass the word along to the next man and he to the next and so on until all have been notified. Then we will immediately come together and return to camp, that is, of course, if we have not already found the cache. If before that time any one finds what he thinks may be the rock he will pass the word to his neighbour, and we'll close in and make our search together. If it begins to snow, and the snow is too thick for us to see our next neighbour, we'll close in, for in that case we would miss the rock anyway. Do you all understand?"

Every one understood, as the chorus of "Yes, sir," testified.

"Jamie," said Doctor Joe, "you're the youngest one, and you haven't had much experience tramp-

ing through the woods. If you get tired, or find it hard, just come over to the brook and follow it down to camp. If you get there ahead of us you might start a fire in our tent stove and put the kettle over."

"I've got plenty o' grit, sir," Jamie boasted. "I can stand un."

"I think you can," agreed Doctor Joe, "but your legs are short. If you get tired don't keep going. Perhaps you had better take the outside place, and if you do get tired and fall out it won't break the line."

Full of eagerness and excitement, the boys took their positions. On the left bank of the brook was David, next him to the left Obadiah Button, then Andy, beyond him Seth Muggs, and finally Jamie. This placed Jamie on the extreme left flank, in accordance with Doctor Joe's suggestion, and the farthest from David and the brook.

On the right bank of the brook were Peter Sparks, Doctor Joe, Lige Sparks and Micah Dunk in the order named, with Micah on the extreme right flank.

It was a great and thrilling adventure for all the boys, but particularly for Jamie. There was a mystery to be solved, and in the attempt to solve it there was not merely curiosity but a worthy object in view. If the cache proved to contain Lem Horn's silver fox skin Lem and his whole family would be made happy.

And Jamie, in his unwavering loyalty, was anxious to lift from Indian Jake all suspicion of the crime. At present every one in the Bay believed Indian Jake had committed the crime, save only the Angus boys. Even Doctor Joe was not satisfied of his innocence, and, indeed, everything pointed to Indian Jake's guilt. Doctor Joe believed that the Angus boys were prejudiced in their loyalty to Indian Jake because of the fact that he had done them kindnesses. Jamie was sure that if they found this cache there would be proof that he and David and Andy were right and everybody else wrong. Not only did this feature of the adventure appeal to Jamie, but also the fact that he was for the first time in his life trailing in the wilderness and taking part in an undertaking that seemed to him one of vast importance.

Jamie had never slept in a tent. His only acquaintance with the great wilderness had been confined to the woods surrounding The Jug, and always when in company with David or Andy or his father or Doctor Joe. Now he was determined to do as well as any of them, and, no matter how tired he became, to stick to the trail until Doctor Joe gave the signal to return to camp.

As they ascended the slope Jamie kept a sharp lookout to right and left. Now and again Seth Muggs on his right was hidden by a clump of thick spruce trees or would disappear behind a wooded rise, presently to appear again through the trees.

Jamie was happy. He was keeping pace with the others without the least difficulty. Doctor Joe had hinted that his short legs might not permit him to do this. He would prove that he was as able as Seth Muggs or any of them!

Nothing happened for nearly an hour, and Jamie was beginning to think that the search was to end in disappointment, when suddenly his heart gave a leap of joy. Far to the left and just visible through the trees rose the outlines of a great gray rock.

"That's the rock!" exclaimed Jamie. "That's sure he! I'll look at un for signs, and then if there's any signs to be seen about un I'll call Seth!"

Jamie ran through the trees and brush to the rock, which proved, indeed, to be a landmark. It stood alone, and was twice as high as Jamie's head.

Here he was treated to another thrill. On the west side of the rock was the charred wood of a recent camp fire. A tent had been pitched near at hand as was evidenced by the still unwithered boughs that had formed a bed, and discarded tent pegs, and there were many ax cuttings.

"'Twere white men and not Injuns that camped here," reasoned Jamie. "All the Injun fires I ever heard tell about were made smaller than this un. And these folk were pilin' up stones on the side. No Injuns or Bay folk does that, *what*ever!"

Jamie continued to investigate.

"'Twere not Bay folk did the ax cuttin' either," he decided. "All the Bay folk and Injuns uses small axes when they travels, and this cuttin' were done with big uns!"

Looking about the rock he found other evidences that the campers had been strangers to the country. There was a piece of a Halifax newspaper, an empty bottle and a small tin can containing matches. The box of matches he put into his pocket. They had been lost or overlooked, and no hunter of the Bay or Indian would ever have been guilty of such carelessness. Of this Jamie had no question.

"'Tis sure the rock the writin' tells about," he commented.

Jamie looked a little farther, and then suddenly realizing that he should not wait too long before calling, shouted lustily:

"Seth, I finds un! Seth! Seth! I finds the rock!"

He waited a moment for Seth's answering call, but there was no response. A much longer time had elapsed during Jamie's examination of the rock and the surroundings than he realized, and in the meantime Seth and the others had passed on, and Seth was now in a deeply wooded gully where Jamie's shouts failed to reach him.

"Seth! Seth! I finds un! I finds the place!" he shouted again, but still there was no response from Seth.

"I'm thinkin' now Seth has gone too far to hear," said Jamie to himself. "'Twould be fine to find Lem's silver all alone and take un back to camp. I'll just do what the writin' says. I'll pace up the places. I can do un all by myself, and 'twill be a fine surprise to un all to take the silver back to camp."

Jamie had no doubt that the mysterious cache contained the stolen fox pelt. He had so visualized it and accepted it as a fact. No thought of disappointment in this, or of danger to himself entered his head. His whole mind was centered upon one point. He would be the hero of the Bay if, quite alone, he succeeded in recovering Lem's property and at the same time in clearing Indian Jake of suspicion.

Without further delay he drew from his pocket the carefully folded copy of directions that Doctor Joe had given him and sat down to study it.

XIII

SURPRISED AND CAPTURED

"TWENTY paces to a hackmatack tree, north," read Jamie. He drew from his pocket the little compass Doctor Joe had given him, and took the direction.

"That's the way she goes, the way the needle points," he said to himself. "I'll pace un off. North is the way she goes first."

But an obstacle presented itself. The northern face of the rock was irregular, and from end to end fully thirty feet in length. From what point of the rock was the northerly line to begin? Where should he begin to pace? Finally he selected a middle point as the most probable.

"'Twill be from here," he decided. "They'd never be startin' the line from anywheres but the middle."

Holding the compass in his hand that he might make no mistake, and trembling with the excitement of one about to make a great discovery, he paced to the northward, stretching his short legs to the longest possible stride, until he counted twenty paces. It brought him not to a hackmatack

tree, but to the middle of several spruce trees. He returned to the rock and tried again. This time he was led to a tangle of brush to the left of the spruce trees into which his former effort had taken him. He was vastly puzzled.

"'Tis something I does wrong," he mused. "Doctor Joe were sayin' the compass points right, and she is right. 'Tis wonderful strange though."

He experimented again and discovered that if he did not hold the compass perfectly level the needle did not swing properly. In his excitement he had doubtless tipped the compass, and with the needle thus bound he had been led astray.

He climbed to the top of the rock and placing his compass in a level position permitted the needle to swing to a stationary position. He extracted a match from the tin box in his pocket and laid it upon the compass dial exactly parallel with the needle. Lying on his face he squinted his eye along the match to a distant tree. Rising he observed the tree that he might make no mistake, and returning to the face of the rock strode twenty of his best paces in the direction of the tree. Again he was disappointed. There was no hackmatack tree at the end of his line.

"Maybe he was a big man that does the pacin' and takes longer paces," he said to himself. "I'll go a bit farther."

He looked directly ahead, but saw no hackmatack within a reasonable extension of his twenty paces to

account for the longer strides the original pacer may have taken. Much discouraged, he was about to return again to the rock when suddenly his eye fell upon a small and scarcely noticeable hackmatack six paces to the right of his north line and a little beyond him.

"That must be he, now!" he exclaimed. "'Tis the only hackmatack I sees hereabouts. 'Tis *sure* he! I'll pace un back to the rock! If the tree's nuth'ard from the rock, the rock'll be south'ard from the tree. I'll try pacin' that way."

With his compass, Jamie sighted from the tree to the rock, and to his satisfaction the rock, lying due south, fell within his line of sight, but at the extreme easterly end of its northerly face instead of at the center, the point from which he had run his original line. He now paced the distance which proved to be a little farther than twenty of Jamie's longest strides, which he accounted for again by reasoning that a man could take longer steps than he could stretch with his short legs.

Then for the first time Jamie observed two stones, one on top of the other, at the foot of the rock and at the very place to which his compass had directed him. He lifted the stones and an examination proved that they had not long since been placed in the position in which he found them. Both had marks of earth upon them on the lower side, but the stone which was below rested upon the carpet of caribou moss which covered the

ground and prevented it from coming in contact with the earth. It could not, therefore, have been stained with soil in the place where Jamie now found it.

"They was put there as a pilot mark! They shows the true mark of the place to pace from," he soliloquized, replacing them in the position in which he had found them. "I'll take un as a pilot, whatever, and see how she comes out on the next tack."

He returned to the little hackmatack tree and again consulted the paper.

"Forty paces west to a round rock," he read, observing, "That won't be so hard now as findin' the hackmatack tree. 'Twill be easier to see, whatever."

Methodically he gathered some stones and erected a small pedestal upon which to rest his compass while he ran his westerly line. Loose stones of proper size were hard to find. The smaller ones were frozen fast to the ground, and the larger ones were too heavy for him to move. But presently he collected a sufficient number of small stones to form a pedestal a foot and a half high.

Upon the top of this he levelled his compass, and turned it until the needle, swinging freely, rested upon the north point on the dial. Then, as before, he placed a match upon the face of the compass to form a line from the "E" to the "W" on the

dial. Crouching down upon the ground Jamie sighted, as before, to a distant tree, but as he did so he became suddenly aware that the light was fading. He had been much longer than he had realized, consuming a great deal of time in examining the signs around the big rock and in taking his distances from the rock.

"This line is sure right the first time," he said. "'Twill not take me much longer, and I finds the round rock now. If I finds un I'll be sure I'm goin' the right way, and I'll be right handy to the cache."

Thirty-nine of Jamie's paces brought him to the tree upon which he had taken sight, and looking a little way beyond he saw, to his great joy, a round rock.

Jamie was trembling with excitement as he ran eagerly to the rock. This was the second direction laid down upon the paper! There could be no doubt that he was right! Everything answered the description! He would surely find the cache now! What a surprise it would be to Doctor Joe and the boys if he came walking into camp triumphantly bearing Lem Horn's silver fox skin.

"Sixty paces south," he next read from his directions.

He placed his compass upon the top of the round rock, which rose perhaps three feet above the ground, and repeated his former method, again sighting to a convenient tree. Twilight was per-

ceptibly thickening. At this season darkness falls early in Labrador, and now, because of a heavily clouded sky, it was following twilight quickly.

"I'll keep at un till I finds the cache. I'll find un before I goes back to camp *whatever*," he determined. "'Twill be easy enough gettin' to camp even if 'tis dark before I gets there. The brook's handy by, and I'll just go to un and follow un down to camp. I hope they'll not be worryin' about me, but if they does 'twill not be for long. I'll soon be there now."

The distance from the round rock to the tree upon which he had sighted proved to be but thirty of his short paces. Here he was compelled to pile stones again upon which to build a resting place for his compass before taking another sight. Small stones such as he could lift were not easily found, and when at length he was prepared to take the sight the gloom had grown so thick that he had difficulty in locating a tree that he judged was sufficiently far away to cover the remaining distance. Thirty more paces, however, brought him to the tree, and to his unbounded joy a lone white birch stood just beyond.

Within three paces of the birch the mysterious cache was hidden. Here, however, the directions failed to be sufficiently explicit. Either through oversight or purposely the bearings from the birch were omitted.

Jamie paced first to one tree and then to an-

other; any of several trees might be the correct one. They were all thickly branched spruce trees capable of concealing the coveted cache. Jamie was puzzled, and every moment it was growing darker. He looked up into the branches of one and then another, hoping to see a bag suspended from a limb, but if a bag were there it blended so completely with the foliage that even its outlines were not revealed.

"I'll have to climb un all," said Jamie finally, "and I'll have to be spry about un too or 'twill be fair dark before I gets to climb the last of un."

For his first effort he chose a tree three paces beyond the birch and on a line with the rock. He had no difficulty in shinning up the trunk until he reached a lower limb, and then he quite easily drew himself up.

Climbing through the thick screen of branches he looked eagerly for the coveted hidden mystery, not stopping until he was well into the tree top and had made quite certain that no cache was hidden there. Then, as he looked up toward the sky, he felt a snowflake on his face.

"Snowin'!" he exclaimed. "I'll have to be hurryin' now. And it snows hard, Doctor Joe sure will be gettin' worried about me."

At that moment Jamie heard the breaking of a twig. He paused and listened. Presently he heard footsteps, and a moment later a man's voice. Through the gathering darkness appeared the

figures of two men, and even at that distance Jamie knew they were not Bay folk. They travelled less silently, and the tread of heavy boots is quite unlike that of moccasined feet.

Jamie crouched close to the tree trunk. He scarcely breathed. The approaching figures came directly toward the white birch.

"It's lucky we saw them fellers first," said a gruff voice. "They'd sure suspicioned somethin' if they'd got a glim on us. They never seen us comin' over, and they'll never find our boat where we hid her."

"If they found that there writin' you went and left in the tin can you were tellin' about, they've liker'n not follered the directions you give and found the swag," growled the other. "That won't be very lucky for us."

"They'd never find her," assured the first speaker. "They'd have to find the rock first, and she's a good two mile from shore. They'd never find her in a dog's age. Here we be. Here's the white birch."

"Well, where's the tree you went and hid the stuff in?"

"Here she is." The man indicated a tree next to that in which Jamie was perched. "Here, take my leg and gimme a boost. I'll go up and get it."

Jamie scarcely dared breathe. He could see one of the men make a stirrup of his hands, and the other man step into it and swing into the tree. Up

he climbed to a point directly opposite Jamie, and so near Jamie could hear him breathe.

"Got her, Bill?" asked the man below.

"You bet I got her! She's here all right, just like I said she'd be," answered the man in the tree.

Jamie's heart sank. After all his hopes and efforts he became suddenly aware that he could not return to camp triumphantly bearing Lem Horn's silver fox pelt as he had pictured himself doing. Lem would never get the pelt again. Every one in the Bay would go on forever believing that Indian Jake had shot Lem and stolen the pelt. And he had been so near setting all this right! It never entered his head that the cache could contain anything else than the pelt. Because he wished Indian Jake to be innocent of the crime, he had come to believe that he *was* innocent, even though Indian Jake himself had not denied having the stolen property in his possession, and everybody save only himself and David and Andy believed Indian Jake had it.

"Here she be safe and sound and as good as ever," said the man as he dropped from the lower limb of the tree to the ground. "Let's open her up and have a drink, Hank."

"I'll go you, Bill. My throat feels as long as a camel's and as dry as a snake's back."

Jamie could see the man called Bill stooping over the small bag to untie it, and presently draw forth a bottle.

"Here she be, and the other three bottles too," said Bill. "You open her up, Hank, while I see if the roll is there and the other stuff."

Bill ran his arm in the bag.

"Yes, it's all right," he assured. "I guess the Captain didn't miss the money before the ship sailed, and there ain't any way of his gettin' word in to the boss about it now before next spring. We're safe enough to take it back and make our divvy. There won't be any search made for it now."

"Naw, we're safe enough now," Hank tipped the bottle to his lips, and handed it to Bill. "The boss ain't missed his liker neither, and there won't be any to miss pretty soon the way you're pullin' at it."

"I don't know's I took any more'n you did," said Bill petulantly, corking the bottle and returning it to the bag. "It was a good move to play safe anyhow and hide the swag until we made sure the boss wouldn't go searching through our stuff for it. I don't know's he'd suspicion us any more'n the rest of the crew, but he'd searched everybody's stuff if the Captain had give him a tip."

"You bet he would!" agreed Hank. "We just played in luck right through. They won't blame us for that other job, will they? They ain't likely to go makin' a search for that, be they?"

"Naw!" said Bill. "That other feller, whatever his name is, has got 'em on his trail for that.

We ain't in it. They'll never suspicion us for that. We made a slick job of that."

"Well, let's beat it back," said Hank. "It's snowin' and it's goin' to snow hard. The sooner we gets back to camp the better we'll be off."

Bill swung the bag over his shoulder, when suddenly he stopped and exclaimed:

"What's that?"

Jimmy had sneezed, and again he sneezed.

"Some sneak in that there tree!" and Bill with an oath dropped his bag and seized his rifle, which he had leaned against the tree in which Jimmy was perched. "I'll put a bullet up there! That'll settle that feller, whoever he is!"

XIV

THE TWO DESPERADOS

"DON'T shoot, sir! It's just me!" Jamie piped in terror from the tree.

"It's only a kid!" Bill swore an oath of disgust and lowered his rifle. "You git down out'n that tree! Git down quicker'n lightenin', too!"

"I'm comin', sir!" came Jamie's frightened voice from the tree top.

Jamie lost no time in descending from his perch, and in a moment stood trembling before his captors. It was quite dark now and snowing hard, and to the frightened little lad the two big lumbermen loomed up like giants.

"What you doin' here?" demanded Bill with an oath as he seized Jamie's arm with a grip that made the lad wince.

"I were—I were huntin' for the cache," confessed Jamie.

"Goin' to steal our cache, was ye? Well, we'll teach you to leave other folkses things be!" The man gave Jamie a savage shake. "Tryin' to steal our cache, eh? Who set you on to it? That's what I want to know! Who set you on to stealin' it now?"

"I weren't goin' to steal un, sir," chattered

Jamie, horrified at the implication that he was a thief.

"What were you huntin' the cache for then? Don't lie, you little rat, or I'll twist your neck off!"

The fellow seemed quite capable of executing the threat literally, as he again shook Jamie savagely.

"I—ain't—lyin'—about—un, sir!" plead Jamie between the shakes. "I were—just—goin'—to—look—at un, and—if—'tweren't—Lem Horn's silver fox—I weren't—goin' to touch un!"

"Well, 'tain't Lem Horn's silver fox. It's things of our'n! Do you hear that? *'Tain't* Lem Horn's silver, it's our'n what's in that there bag! You leave our things be! Do you hear what I'm sayin'! You and your gang keep away from our cache, and don't go foolin' with anything you don't know anything about! Do you hear?" The man gave Jamie another shake.

"I—I didn't know! We—we just suspicioned 'twere Lem's silver, and I were wantin' to take un back to he," explained Jamie.

"You heard what I said? 'Tain't Lem Horn's silver! You hear that, don't you?"

"Aye, sir, I saw what you was takin' out of the bag, and 'tweren't Lem Horn's silver. 'Twere something to drink out of a bottle. I sees you drinkin' it."

"Let the kid go, Bill," laughed Hank, who until now had kept silent.

"We were all thinkin' 'twere Lem's silver. I'll

tell un 'twere not the silver but somethin' else that you takes from the Captain that you were hidin' in the cache," said Jamie hopefully.

"You goin' to tell that! You heard what we said, and you goin' to blab it?" the man roared in a rage.

"Aye, sir, I'll just tell the others so's they'll not be thinkin' 'tis Lem's silver," said Jamie innocently.

"The others? Who's 'the others'?" demanded Bill.

"Doctor Joe and the other scouts," Jamie explained.

"'Doctor Joe and the other scouts,'" quoted the big lumberman. "Who's this here Doctor Joe? And who's the other scouts?"

"He's Doctor Joe! Everybody knows Doctor Joe!" explained Jamie, quite astonished that any one should ask who Doctor Joe might be. "The scouts be the other lads of the Bay, sir."

"Well, this here Doctor Joe, whoever he is, and these here other scouts, whoever they be, better keep out'n our business and mind their own," roared the man. "I suppose they're this here bunch what's campin' down by the brook and been runnin' all over the country to-day?"

"Aye, sir, we're all campin' down handy to the brook, and we've all been lookin' for the cache, but I'm the only one that finds the rock," admitted Jamie.

"You ain't camped down there now!" The man swore a mighty and strange oath that made Jamie tremble. "You was camped there, but *now* you ain't! You're goin' with us, *you* be! Hear that?"

"Aw, let the kid go!" broke in Hank, impatiently. "We better be gettin' a jog on us too. Leave the kid be, and come on. He's just a kid and he can't kick up any trouble. Leave him be, and let's get out of here."

"Not me!" The man gave Jamie's arm a painful twist. "I ain't goin' to leave this here kid to go back and blab to that there Doctor Joe and the hull country. He heard our talk, and if it gets to the boss you know what that means. I ain't takin' any chances on him, and I'm half of this."

"We'll be gettin' in bigger trouble if we takes him along. We'll have the hull country huntin' us," Hank protested.

"You heard me! I ain't goin' to take chances on his blabbin'! He goes along, and I'll fix him so's he won't blab and nobody'll get our trail if they do hunt us. The snow'll hide it," insisted Bill.

"Well, let's get a move on then," said Hank. "The wind's risin' and it's goin' to kick up a sea. I don't want to be caught out on the Bay again in a sea like we had that other time. The snow's goin' to be thick, too, and we'll lose our bearings."

"Go on, then. I'll foller with the kid," said Bill, still holding Jamie's aching arm.

"Better let the kid go," said Hank, swinging a rifle over his left shoulder and with an ax in his right hand striding away through the darkness and thickly falling snow.

"Come along you!" and Jamie's captor, gripping Jamie's arm in one hand and with a rifle in the other, followed in the trail of the man Hank dragging Jamie almost too fast for his legs to carry him.

On and on they went through the darkness. Now and again Jamie fell over stumps or other obstructions, and each time the man, with a curse, jerked him to his feet.

Snow was falling heavily and the wind was rising. Once they crossed a frozen marsh where the snow swirled around them in clouds. Then they were again among the forest trees, forging ahead in silence save for an occasional curse by the man who held Jamie in his merciless and relentless grip.

XV

MISSING!

SETH MUGGS, intent upon keeping pace with Andy on his right, and not permitting him to get out of sight, quite neglected to be equally cautious as to Jamie on his left. In this Seth was in no wise neglectful. The responsibility in each case, in order to keep the line from breaking, was to keep the neighbour nearer the brook in view. In this Jamie alone had failed.

Jamie had, indeed, been out of line for a considerable time before Seth became aware of the fact. Even then he felt no concern. Doctor Joe had instructed Jamie to return to camp if he became weary, and when he was missed had no doubt he had taken advantage of the suggestion.

Nevertheless, when Doctor Joe passed the word along the line to reassemble, Seth gave several lusty shouts for Jamie. When, after a reasonable time, he received no reply, he was satisfied Jamie was snug in camp with the kettle boiling for tea, and he turned down to join the others at the brook.

"It's a little later than I thought," said Doctor

Joe as they came together, "but we'll have plenty of time to reach camp before dark. Now let's count noses."

"Where's Jamie?" asked David. "We're all here but Jamie."

"I'm thinkin' he gets tired and goes back to camp like Doctor Joe were sayin' for he to do," suggested Seth. "I missed he a while back."

"How long has it been since you saw him last, Seth?" asked Doctor Joe.

"I'm not rightly knowin', but a half hour *what*-ever," said Seth, "and I'm thinkin' 'twere a bit longer."

"He has probably gone back to camp then," agreed Doctor Joe. "It was a pretty hard tramp for such a little fellow. It is quite natural that he did not like to admit to you that he could not keep up with us, and he just slipped quietly away and returned to camp and said nothing about it. He couldn't well get lost with the brook so near to guide him."

"Jamie'd never be gettin' lost whatever," asserted Andy. "He's wonderful good at findin' his way about."

"'Tis goin' to snow, and 'twill be dark early," suggested David, as the little party turned down the brook to retrace their steps to camp. "There's a bend in the brook here; let's cut across un and save time. If she sets in to snow to-night 'tis like to keep un up all day to-morrow, and we'd better

get back as quick as we can to cut plenty of wood and have un on hand."

"Very well," agreed Doctor Joe. "You go ahead and guide us, David."

"'Twill be fine and cozy just bidin' in camp and studyin' up the things in the book," said Obadiah as they followed David in a short cut toward camp. "We'll be havin' a fine time even if it does snow too hard to go about."

"Yes," agreed Doctor Joe, "we can do that and learn a great many things about scouting."

Suddenly David held up his hand for silence, and stooping peered through the trees ahead. The others followed his gaze, and there, not above fifty yards away and looking curiously at them, stood a caribou.

Only David and Doctor Joe had brought rifles. Almost instantly David's rifle rang out, and the caribou turned and disappeared.

"I'm sure I hit he!" exclaimed David running in the direction the caribou had taken. "I couldn't miss he so close, and a fair shot!"

"You hit he!" exclaimed Andy who had dashed ahead. "You hit he, Davy! Here's the mark of blood!"

A trail of blood left no doubt that the caribou had been hard hit, but it was followed for nearly a mile before they came upon the prostrate animal.

"Now we'll have plenty of fresh deer's meat!"

burst out Obadiah enthusiastically. "We'll have meat for supper, and I'm wonderful hungry for un!"

"Yes," agreed Doctor Joe, "we had better dress it at once. There are enough of us to carry all the meat back with us to camp, and that will save making a return trip."

"'Twill be a fine surprise for Jamie when we comes back with deer's meat," said Andy enthusiastically.

"'Twill make us a bit late and he'll be thinkin' we finds the cache," suggested David. "I hopes he won't be comin' up the brook again to look for us."

"I hardly think he'll do that," said Doctor Joe, "but to be sure he does not some of you had better go to the brook and leave a sign to tell him which way we've gone. David and I will skin and dress the caribou."

"Come along, Seth," Andy volunteered. "We'll be goin' over to make the sign."

"Come back here as soon as you've done it," directed Doctor Joe. "We'll need your help in carrying the meat to camp."

"Aye, sir, we'll be comin' right back," agreed Andy as he and Seth hurried away.

Close to the brook, in a place where it could not fail to be seen, the lads set a pole at an angle of forty-five degrees, pointing in the direction in which the caribou had been killed. Against the

pole and about a third of the distance from its lower end an upright stick was placed. This was an Indian sign familiar to all the hunters and wilderness folk, indicating that the party had gone in the direction in which the pole sloped, the upright stick a little way from the butt further indicating that the distance was not far.

"Jamie'll know what that means, and if he wearies of bidin' alone in camp and comes to find us he'll not be missin' us now whatever," said Andy with satisfaction, as he and Seth turned back.

" I'm goin' to blaze the trail over, and he won't be like to miss un then," suggested Seth taking the ax.

When Andy and Seth rejoined the others Doctor Joe and David were nearly finished skinning the caribou, and in due time they had it ready to cut up. The head was severed with as little of the neck meat as possible that there might be no unnecessary waste, for they could not carry the head with them. Then the tongue was removed, for this was considered a tidbit.

The question of how to carry the meat to camp was finally settled by making two litters with poles. The carcass was now cut into two nearly equal parts, one of which was placed on each litter. Doctor Joe took the forward end of one of the litters, and David the forward end of the other. With two boys carrying the rear end of each litter, and the other lads the skin, heart, liver and

tongue and the two rifles and the ax they at length set out for camp.

Night was falling and the first flakes of the coming snow-storm were felt upon their faces when finally the little white tents came in view.

"They's no light," remarked David, who was in advance. "Jamie's savin' candles. I'm hopin' now he has the kettle boilin'."

"He'll have un boilin'," assured Andy, who was one of the two boys at the rear of David's litter. "He'll be proud to have un boilin' and supper started."

"They's no smoke!" exclaimed David apprehensively as they came closer. "Jamie, b'y!" he shouted. "Where is you? Come out and see what we're gettin'!"

But no Jamie came, and there was no answering call. The stretchers were hastily placed on the ground, and every tent searched for Jamie.

"Jamie's never been comin' back since we leaves!" David declared. "Whatever has been happenin' to he?"

"I can't understand it," said Doctor Joe. "He could not possibly have been lost. Andy, you and Micah run down and look at the boats and see if he has been there."

Andy and Micah ran excitedly to the boats to report a few moments later that there were no indications of Jamie's return.

"David, you and I shall have to go and look

for him," said Doctor Joe quietly. "Andy, you and the other lads build a fire outside as a guide. Get your supper, and don't worry until we return."

"What do you think's been happenin' to Jamie?" asked Andy anxiously.

"We took a short cut and did not follow the brook where it makes a wide bend," suggested Doctor Joe. "He may be waiting for us along the brook at that point."

"Oh, I hopes you'll find he there!" said Andy fervently.

"Get your rifle and plenty of cartridges, David," directed Doctor Joe. "I'll carry mine also. When we get up the trail we'll shoot to let Jamie know we're looking for him."

Each with a rifle on his shoulder, Doctor Joe in the lead and David following close behind, the two turned away into the now thickly falling snow and darkness.

XVI

BOUND AND HELPLESS

"SEE here," said the man in front, stopping and turning about after what had seemed hours to the exhausted and bruised Jamie, "I for one ain't goin' to try to cross the Bay to-night in this here snow. It's thicker'n mud, and there's a sea runnin' I won't take chances with, not while I'm sober. We may's well bunk."

"Guess you're right, pardner, we better bunk. But pull farther away to the west'ard before we put on a fire," agreed Jamie's captor with evident relief. "That bunch'll be out huntin' this here kid, and they may run on to us if we camp too close to 'em."

"We're a good two mile from 'em now. They'll never run on to us," argued the other.

"Go on a piece farther," insisted the man called "Bill," who was gripping Jamie's arm so hard it ached.

"Let the kid go! What's the use of draggin' him along? He'll just be in our way, and we've got troubles enough of our own," suggested the other.

"He ain't goin' back and have a chance to give us away to that bunch, not if I knows it. I've about made up my mind to croak him. He knows too much. Go on and find a place to bunk. I'm follerin'."

"You won't croak anybody while I'm hangin' around! I'm tellin' you I've got troubles enough on my hands already without chasin' a noose. I'm goin' to save my neck anyhow, and I ain't goin' to be mixed up in any croakin'," muttered the one called "Hank," as he turned and plunged forward again through the darkness.

What "croaking" meant Jamie did not in the least know, but he suspected that it referred to something not in the least pleasant for himself. He was too tired, however, to think or care a great deal as he was dragged on, stumbling in the darkness over fallen logs, and bumping into trees.

It seemed an interminable time to Jamie before the man ahead again stopped, and said decisively:

"We'll camp here. We've gone far enough, and I ain't goin' another rod. We're a good five mile from them fellers you're afraid of."

"All right, I'm satisfied. You've got the ax, go ahead and make a cover," said Bill. "Kid, you come with me and help break branches for the bed. Don't you loaf neither. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir," answered Jamie timidly.

It was a relief to stop walking and to feel the man relax the relentless grip upon his arm, and

Jamie, meekly enough, began breaking boughs with the man always within striking distance, as though afraid that he might run away and make his escape, though Jamie was quite too tired for that.

The man with the ax cut a stiff pole and trimmed it. Then he lopped off the lower branches of two spruce trees that stood a convenient distance apart, and laid the pole on a supporting limb of each tree, about four feet from the ground. This was to form the ridge of a lean-to shelter. Poles were now cut and formed into a sloping roof by resting one end upon the ridge pole, the other upon the ground, and the poles covered with a thick thatch of branches to exclude the snow.

When this was completed a quantity of dry wood was cut, and in front of the lean-to a fire was lighted.

While the man with the ax was engaged in thatching the roof and lighting the fire and gathering wood, the other turned his attention to the preparation of the bed.

"Don't you try to break away, now!" he growled at Jamie. "I'll shoot you like I would a rat if you do. Just stand there and hand me them branches, and shake the snow off'n 'em first, too."

Running was the last thing that Jamie contemplated doing even though there had been no danger of the man executing his threat. He was so tired he could scarcely stand upon his feet, and he had eaten nothing since the hurried meal at midday.

At length the bed was laid, and the men sat down within the shelter of the lean-to, and Bill ordered:

"Git down here, you kid, and set still too. Don't you try to leave here. You know what's comin' to you if you do."

As Jamie meekly and thankfully complied, Bill ran his arm into the bag that had been cached in the tree, and which had been the cause of all of Jamie's trouble, and drawing forth a bottle removed the cork and took a long pull from its contents. Making a face as though it did not taste good, he handed it over to Hank, remarking:

"Have a nip, Hank. It'll warm you up and make you feel good. I don't like this cruisin' in the dark."

Hank accepted the bottle and after drinking from it returned it to the bag. Then each drew a pipe and a plug of black tobacco from his pocket, and cutting some of the tobacco with the knife rolled it between the palms of his hands, stuffed it into his pipe and lighted it with a brand from the fire. For several minutes they sat and smoked in silence.

In the meantime Jamie sat timidly upon the boughs next the man Bill. As the fire blazed, the chill of the storm and night was driven out, and a cozy, comfortable warmth filled the lean-to. Jamie's eyes became heavy, and in spite of his unhappy position he dozed.

"See here," said the man, "you may's well sleep, but I ain't goin' to take any chances on you. I'm goin' to tie you so's you won't be givin' us the slip."

"Oh, leave the kid be, Bill! He's all right!" the other man objected.

"I ain't takin' chances," growled Bill. "I'm goin' to have some say about it, too."

He fumbled in his pocket, and drawing forth some stout twine proceeded to tie Jamie's hands securely behind his back. Then he tied Jamie's feet, and gave him a push to the rear.

"Now I guess you'll stay with us all right," he grinned.

"Aw, leave the kid be! What you want to tie him for?" Hank protested. "He can't get away. Better let him go anyhow."

"You leave me be to do what I wants to do and I'll leave you be to do what you wants to," growled Bill. "I'm goin' to keep this kid fast. This is my business."

"I don't know as it's all your business," snapped Hank. "I'm mixed up in it too, seems to me."

"Well, I caught the kid, and I'm goin' to have my say about what I do with him," Bill retorted. "I ain't goin' to let him make trouble for us, not if I knows what I'm about."

Hank made no reply, but puffed silently at his pipe.

Jamie was wide awake again. This man Bill

meant some evil, and the little lad wondered vaguely what it could be that was to be done to himself, and what his fate was to be. He was vastly uncomfortable, too, with his hands tied behind his back, though he was glad enough to be permitted to lie down. He could scarcely keep the tears back, as he thought of the happy time in camp that had been planned, of the snug tent where he was to have slept with Doctor Joe, and of his own warm bed at home, and he wondered whether he would ever see The Jug again.

"The boss'll be sore at us, Hank, if we ain't back to camp to-morrow," remarked Bill presently, breaking the silence. "He can be sore though if he wants to. He can't fire us fellers for bein' away even if he does get sore and cuss us out. He needs us bad, and he can't get any more men now. I don't mind his cussin'. Cussin' don't hurt a feller."

"If the wind don't get worse and the snow lets up some so we can make out our way we better go back though as soon as it's light enough in the mornin'," answered Hank. "I wish I was out'n this business anyhow."

"We can get across the Bay even if it does snow some in the mornin', long's there ain't too much sea," said Bill. "I'm for gettin' away from here too. We've got the swag all right and nobody'll know about it, if we don't let this kid loose to blab. It was lucky we caught this feller before he found it, but he heard too much."

"What you goin' to do with him, Bill?"

"Croak him. I ain't goin' to take chances with him. It ain't my way to take chances I don't have to take."

"You better not do any croakin', Bill. I won't stand for *that*. I'm tough, and I've done plenty of tough things in my day, but I never croaked a little kid like him, and I won't stand for it."

"Don't you go and get soft now. 'Tain't any worse to croak a kid than a man. You'd croak a man if you had to, and this is a time when we've got to do it to save ourselves."

"Well, I won't stand for it while I'm sober, and I'm sober now even if I have had a drink or two." Hank reached for a firebrand with which to relight his pipe.

"Well, you've got to stand for this. I'm mixed up in it just as much as you be, and I'm goin' to have some say. I ain't goin' to take chances on him goin' back to his gang and givin' us away."

"How you goin' to do it?"

"Take him along in the boat and drop him overboard. That's the easiest way. There ain't much chance of anybody findin' him, and if they do they'll just think he got drownded some way hisself. Dead folks don't talk."

"That's somethin' I won't stand for! You can't go droppin' anybody overboard while I'm in the boat! Not if I know it!"

"What you goin' to do, play the sucker?" Bill

turned angrily toward his companion. "Maybe you'll go and peach!"

"Don't you call me a sucker! Don't you say I'm a peacher!" Hank rose to his feet and faced Bill menacingly.

For a moment Jamie thought the men were going to fight, but Bill remained seated and his manner suddenly changed. Jamie thought he acted as though he were afraid.

"See here, Hank," Bill's voice was modified and conciliatory, "I ain't callin' you a sucker, and I ain't sayin' you'll peach. What's the use of us fellers fightin' about it? We're in this together and we're pardners. We've got to hang together. What's the use of us gettin' on the outs?"

"I'm willin' to hang together but I won't be called a sucker or peacher by anybody, and I ain't goin' to stand for any croakin' neither while I've got a gun! Hear me?"

"What we goin' to do about this here kid then? We can't let him go. He'll up and run back and blab. He's heard too much about our business. We don't want to go huntin' trouble, do we? Well, we'll be huntin' trouble if we let him go. He knows too much and he knows all about who we be too."

"What does he know, now? He don't know anything except what you've gone and blabbed yourself. We just caught him tryin' to swipe our cache. The stuff is our'n. 'Tain't his'n. Our

stuff is our'n, ain't it? What can he blab about? That's what I want to know!"

"He'll go and tell folks we've got this here swag from the ship, and it'll go to the boss. That's what he knows, and that's what he'll blab."

"Well, what we've got is our'n. He can't prove we've got that there swag, and we'll hide it where the boss can't find it. He hain't seen any swag around, has he? He can't say he has neither, and he won't. He just thought maybe we had that there fox skin. What's that got to do with us? We don't care what he thinks, and what he thinks won't hurt us as I knows of. What we've got and what we ain't got don't make any difference to these fellers. What they don't know won't hurt 'em. It ain't theirs, and nobody better go meddlin' in what I has and does. Let that there kid go now, Bill, and get him off'n our hands."

"You just leave him to me, Hank. I ain't goin' to let him go and blab, I say, and get both of us in a hole. I've got *some* say, hain't I, Hank?"

"Well, don't do any croakin' when I'm around to see, that's all I've got to say. He's your'n to do the way you want to with. I won't have any finger in it. It's your job, it ain't mine."

"Well, I'll do the croakin' some other way. You needn't have anything to do about it if you're afraid. I'll do it all by myself."

"Afraid or no afraid I ain't goin' to be mixed up in any croakin', and that ends it as far as I go."

Hank knocked the ashes from his pipe, refilled it from the black plug, and lifting a red hot coal from the fire placed it upon the bowl, and puffed for a moment. When the tobacco was glowing to his satisfaction, he flicked the coal back into the fire, and sat silently smoking.

Jamie, lying quiet, had listened to the conversation of the two men. He was wide awake now. He did not understand the significance of "croaking," but the word had an ominous sound. It referred to something the man called Bill wished to do to him and something to which the man called Hank objected. He understood, however, the threat to throw him into the Bay. The fellow Bill wished to do this while Hank was determined to prevent it.

Instinctively Jamie felt that Hank was only defending him in order to protect himself. He had no personal interest in him, but did not propose to be involved in any trouble that might arise through some action that Bill wished to take. He was glad when, finally, it appeared settled that he was not to be thrown into the sea.

Bill arose and replenished the fire, and following Hank's example refilled and lighted his pipe, then reseated himself.

Neither of the men spoke. Beyond their great hulking figures the fire gleamed and sent a circle of radiance. Beyond the circle the forest lay as black as a tomb. The snow fell steadily, and the

wind sighed and moaned ominously through the tree tops.

What were Doctor Joe and the lads doing? Were they searching for him through the blackness of the night and the storm? If he had only followed Doctor Joe's instructions and returned to camp in season! Would these men kill him? Would he ever see the dear old home at The Jug again?

With these thoughts flashing through his mind Jamie prayed a silent little prayer:

"Dear Lard, don't let un kill me! Take me back to The Jug again!"

Many times he repeated this to himself. Then there came to him something Thomas had once said when the mist was clouding his eyes:

"Have plenty o' grit, lad, and a stout heart like a man."

This comforted and strengthened him, and, like the prayer, he repeated it over and over again to himself as he lay watching the silent men. For a long time he watched them and the fire beyond and the falling snow and the black wall of the forest. Finally tired nature came to his relief. His eyes closed and he fell into a troubled sleep.

XVII

LOST IN A BLIZZARD

AFTER a time Jamie awoke. The two men were still sitting by the fire and were again drinking from the bottle. He was uncomfortable in his cramped position, but dared not move, and he lay very still and watched the men and the fire and the black wall of the mysterious, trackless forest beyond. Shadows rose and fell and flitted in and out of the circle of firelight. Weird and uncanny they seemed, taking strange forms like dancing spirits. In the darkness outside the firelight and moving shadows Jamie fancied that terrible ghoulish forms were stalking stealthily and grinning maliciously at him.

For a long while Jamie lay awake and watched. Again and again the men drank from the bottle, and when they spoke at intervals their voices sounded unnatural and thick. Once one of them arose to replenish the fire, and he moved unsteadily upon his feet, at which the little lad marvelled, for he was a large, strong man. Presently Jamie's eyes drooped again, and once more he slept.

When he again awoke dawn was breaking.

Snow was falling heavily. The two men were in a deep sleep. The fire had died down to a bed of coals, and Jamie was shivering with the cold.

His arms were numb, and his body and limbs ached from the cramped position in which he lay because of his bound arms and feet. With some effort he turned over, and this brought him some relief, but not for long, and presently he rolled back to his original position that he might see the red coals of the fire.

Jamie tried to move his hands, but his wrists were too firmly tied, and the effort brought only pain. Then he lay still and studied the smouldering fire. Behind it lay the remnants of a backlog that had been burned through in the center. The inner ends of the log, where it was separated, were, like the coals before it, red and glowing, and he thought that if he could push them together they would blaze and give out warmth.

Then, suddenly, an idea flashed into Jamie's brain. Those red ends of the log would burn the string that bound him, and he could free himself if he could only reach them and press the string against them.

His movements in turning over had not disturbed his captors. They were still sleeping profoundly. From the condition of the fire it was evident they had been sitting by it the greater part of the night and had replenished it at a late hour, else all the coals would have been dead.

Hank lay at the opposite end of the lean-to from Jamie, and Bill in the center, with their feet toward the fire. Jamie was lying in the back, his head near Bill's head and his feet toward the end of the lean-to farthest from Hank.

For several minutes Jamie studied the position of each and the possibilities of working his way out of the lean-to without awakening the men. Finally he determined to make an attempt to gain his freedom.

Cautiously and as noiselessly as possible he began to wriggle away, inch by inch, from Bill, and toward the fire. Several times he fancied the men moved restlessly in their sleep, but when he looked toward them they appeared to be still sleeping heavily. On each occasion, however, he lay still until he became wholly satisfied that he had been mistaken and that they had not been disturbed.

Little by little he edged away until at length he was well outside the lean-to. His efforts were painful and slow, but in the course of half an hour he was near enough to the end of the log to touch it with his bound feet. His exertions had set his blood in motion and inspired him with hope of success.

With much care and patience he pushed the stick around until he was able to rest the string, where it crossed between his ankles, upon the glowing end. Drawing his feet as far apart as possible, with all the strength he possessed, he was quickly

rewarded by feeling a relaxation, and in a moment his heart leaped with joy. The string was severed.

Squirming around upon his chest, Jamie arose to a kneeling position, and then stood erect. So far as his legs were concerned he was free.

Jamie's first impulse was to run wildly away, but he restrained himself. Standing over the men he looked down upon them. Neither had moved, and to all appearances they were sleeping as soundly as ever.

" I'm thinkin' now I'll try to burn off the string on my hands too," he decided. " 'Twill be easier gettin' on with un free, and I'll travel a rare lot faster with my arms loose."

Burning the strings from his wrists, however, proved a much more difficult problem than burning them from his ankles. He sat down with his back to the hot end of the stick, but discovered that it was no easy matter to find just the right position between the wrists. Several efforts resulted only in painful burns on his hands, but he was not discouraged, and finally was rewarded. The string where it crossed between his wrists was brought into contact with the sharp point of the glowing hot stick, and though the reflected heat burned him cruelly he held the string pressed against the fire until at last it crumbled away and his hands flew apart.

" She took grit," said he, " but I made out to do un."

With the joy of freedom and the anxiety to escape his tormentors, Jamie was oblivious to the pain of his burned and blistered wrists. He could use both hands and feet, and was confident that he would soon find the camp and his friends.

Jamie ran as fast as his short legs would carry him. The snow was nearly knee deep, but it was soft and feathery and he scarcely gave it thought at first. He had no doubt that he knew exactly in which direction camp lay, and it never entered his head that he might go wrong or lose his way as he dashed through the woods at the best speed of which he was capable.

Presently the impediment of the snow compelled him to reduce his gait to a walk, and for nearly an hour he pushed on in what he supposed was a straight line, when he came suddenly upon fresh ax cuttings and a moment later saw through the thickly falling snow a familiar lean-to. He stopped in consternation and fright, scarcely knowing which way to turn. He was within fifty feet of the two desperate men from whom he had so recently fled. In the storm he had made a complete circuit.

The men were still soundly sleeping, and instinctively Jamie backed away. He had lost a full hour of valuable time. The men might awake at any moment, discover his absence and trail him and overtake him in the snow. These thoughts flashed through Jamie's mind, and in wild panic

he turned and ran until at length exhaustion brought him to a halt.

"They'll sure be cotchin' me," he panted, "and I'm not knowin' the way in the snow! I'll be goin' right around and comin' back again to the same place and I don't look out! I can't bide here," he continued in desperation. "I'll have to go somewheres else or they'll sure cotch me!"

Bewildered and frightened Jamie looked wildly about him. Then he bethought himself of the compass in his pocket. Eagerly drawing it forth he held it in his hand and studied its face.

"The Bay's to the suth'ard, *what*ever," he calculated. "If the Bay's to the suth'ard the brook's to the east'ard. I'll be lettin' the compass pilot me to the east'ard. 'Twill take me the right direction whatever."

Levelling the compass carefully in his hand so that the needle swung freely he found the east, and as rapidly as his little legs would carry him set out again in his effort to escape the two sleeping men and to find camp and his friends.

At intervals he stopped to consult his compass. Then he would hurry forward again as fast as ever he could go through the snow, looking behind him fearfully, half expecting each time to see the men in close pursuit, and always with the dread that a gruff voice in the rear would command him to halt, or that a rifle ball would be sent after him without warning.

As time passed and there was no indication that he was followed, Jamie began to feel some degree of security. Because of the storm it was unlikely that the men would venture upon the Bay. They had kept late hours drinking at the bottle, and unless they were awakened by the cold they would in all probability sleep late and therefore not discover his absence until the thickly falling snow had so far covered his trail as to preclude the possibility of them following it with certainty.

With his mind more or less relieved on this point, Jamie suddenly realized that he was hungry. It was nearing midday. He had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and he had the normal appetite of a healthy boy. The snow had perceptibly increased in depth since his escape from the lean-to, and walking was correspondingly hard. He was so hungry and so weary that at length he could scarcely force one foot ahead of the other.

The wind was rising, and in crossing an open frozen marsh the snow drifted before the gale in clouds so dense as to be suffocating. The storm was attaining the proportions of a blizzard, and when Jamie again reached the shelter of the forest beyond the marsh he found it necessary to stop to rest and regain his breath.

"'Twill never do to try to cross another mesh," he decided. "I'm like to be overcome with un and perish before I finds my way out of un to the timber. I'll stick to the woods, and if I can't stick

to un I'll have to bide where I is till the snow stops. I wonder's now if Doctor Joe and David is out lookin' for me. I'm not thinkin' they'd bide in the tent with me lost out here and they not knowin' where I is."

When he was rested a little he arose, took his direction with the compass, and floundered on through the snow.

"They's sure out somewhere lookin' for me," he thought, "but 'tis snowin' so hard they never will find me! I'll have to keep goin' till I finds camp. 'Tis strange now I'm not comin' to the brook, 'tis wonderful strange. I'm thinkin' though I were crossin' two meshes with the men in the night, and I've only been crossin' one goin' back to-day. I'm fearin' I'll never be able to cross un though, when I comes to the next un."

Presently, as Jamie had thought would be the case, he came to another marsh. It satisfied him that he was going in the right direction, but at the same time it lay out before him as a well-nigh impassable barrier. The wind was driving the snow across it in swirling dense clouds, and he stood for a little in the shelter of the trees and viewed it with heavy heart.

"'Tis a bigger mesh than the other," he commented to himself, "but I'll have to try to cross un. I can't bide here. I'll freeze to death with no shelter and I has no ax for makin' a shelter. I'm not knowin' what to do."

For a little while he hesitated, then he plunged out upon the edge of the marsh. He was nearly swept from his feet, and to recover his breath he was forced to retreat again to the woods. Three times he tried to face the storm-swept marsh, but each time was sent staggering back to shelter. It was a task beyond the strength and endurance of so young a lad, and utterly exhausted and bitterly disappointed, he sat down upon the trunk of a fallen tree to rest.

"I never can make un whilst the nasty weather lasts," he acknowledged. "I'm fair scrammed and I'll have to wait for the wind to ease before I tries un again."

He could scarce restrain the tears. It was a bitter disappointment. He was *so* hungry, and *so* weary, and wished *so* hard to reach the safety of camp and freedom from the still present danger of being recaptured.

"I'll have plenty o' grit and a stout heart like a man," he presently declared. "I don't mind bein' a bit hungry, and I'll never be givin' up! I'll never give up *what*ever! Pop says plenty o' grit'll pull a man out o' most any fix. I'm in a bad fix now, and I'll have grit and won't be gettin' scared. 'Twill never do to be gettin' scared *what*-ever."

Jamie sat quietly upon the log, and presently found himself dozing. He sprang to his feet, for sleeping under these conditions was dangerous.

He tried to walk about, but was so tired that he again returned to the log to rest. It was growing colder, and he shivered. The storm was increasing in fury.

"I'm not knowin' what to do!" he said despairingly. "If I goes on I'll perish and if I keeps still I'll freeze to death and I'm too wearied to move about to keep warm. 'Tis likely the storm'll last the night through whatever, and I'll never be able to stick un out that long."

Jamie again found himself dozing, and again he got upon his feet.

"I'll have to be doin' somethin'," said he. "I'll keep my grit and try to think of somethin' to do or I'll perish."

Jamie was right. He was in peril, and grave peril. Even though the storm-swept marsh had not stood in his way he was quite too weary to walk farther. He was thrown entirely upon his own resources. His life depended upon his own initiative, for he was quite beyond help from others. It was a great unpeopled wilderness in which Jamie was lost, and he was but a wee lad, and even though Doctor Joe and David were looking for him there was scarce a chance that they could find him in the raging storm.

XVIII

A PLACE TO "BIDE"

DAZED and almost hopeless Jamie stood and gazed about him at the thick falling snow. His body and brain were tired, but some immediate action was imperative or he would be overcome by his weariness and the cold.

"If I were only bringin' an ax, I could fix a place to bide in and cut wood for a fire," he said. "If I were only bringin' an ax!"

He thrust his hands deep into his pocket and felt the big, stout jack-knife that Doctor Joe had given him, and he drew it out.

"Maybe now I can fix un with just this," he said hopefully. "I've got to have grit and I've got to try my best *what*ever."

He looked up and there, within two feet of the log upon which he had been sitting, were two spruce trees about six feet apart.

"Maybe I can fix un right here," he commented, "and maybe I can lay a fire against the log and if I can get un afire she'll burn a long while and keep un warm."

With much effort he cut and trimmed a stiff,

strong pole. The lower limbs of the trees were not above four feet from the ground, and upon these he rested his pole, extending it from tree to tree. This was to form the ridge pole to support the roof of his lean-to, for he was to form a shelter similar to that improvised by the two men the evening before.

Then he cut other poles to form the roof, and resting them upon the ridge pole and the ground at a convenient angle to make a commodious space beneath, he covered them with a thick thatch of boughs, which were easily broken from the overhanging limbs of surrounding trees. This done he enclosed the ends of his shelter in like manner, and laid beneath it a floor of boughs.

Jamie surveyed his work with satisfaction and hope. No snow could reach the cave-like interior, and it was as well protected and as comfortable as ever a lean-to could be made, and a very little fire would warm it. Though much smaller, it was quite as good a shelter as that made by the two men, and possessed the added advantage of closed ends, which would render it much easier to heat. He had occupied more than two hours in its construction, and it had called for ingenuity and much hard work.

The opening of the lean-to faced the fallen tree trunk, which lay before it in such a position that it would serve excellently as a backlog.

Though he had no ax with which to cut fire-

wood, he soon discovered upon scouting about that scattered through the forest were many dried and broken limbs that could be had for the gathering, and in a little while he had accumulated a sufficient supply to serve for several hours.

This done he pushed away the snow from before the fallen tree trunk as best he could. Using as tinder a handful of the long hairy moss that hung from the inner limbs of the spruce trees, he lighted it with a match from the tin box salvaged the previous day at the big rock. Placing the burning moss upon the cleared spot next the log he applied small sticks and, as they caught fire, larger ones, until presently a fire was blazing and crackling cheerily in front of his lean-to with the fallen tree as a backlog to reflect the heat.

Utterly weary Jamie stretched himself upon his bed of boughs, and it seemed to him that he had never been in a cozier place in all his life.

"Pop were sayin' right when he says grit will help a man over any tight place," breathed Jamie contentedly. "If I were givin' up I'd sure perished before to-morrow mornin', for 'tis growin' wonderful cold; but I has grit and a stout heart like a man, and I gets a place to bide and a fine warm fire to heat un."

With the first moments of relaxation, Jamie became aware that his wrists were exceedingly painful, and upon examination he discovered that they had been burned much worse than he had

realized in his attempts to sever the string that bound them. Large blisters had been raised, and one of the blisters had been broken, doubtless while he was engaged in building his lean-to shelter. The loose skin had been rubbed off, and the angry red wound left unprotected.

"I'll have to fix un," he declared. "The sore places'll be gettin' rubbed against things, and be a wonderful lot worse and I leaves un bide as they is."

In the course of the first aid instruction, Doctor Joe had taught Jamie, as well as David and Andy, the art of applying bandages, but now Jamie had no bandages to apply. For a little while he helplessly contemplated his wrists. But for the fact that they were becoming exceedingly painful he would have decided to ignore them, for in his wearied condition it was an effort to do anything.

"I knows how I'll fix un," he said at length. "I'll cut pieces from the bottom o' my shirt to bind un up with. They'll keep un from gettin' rubbed whatever, and when I gets back to camp Doctor Joe'll fix un up right."

This he proceeded to do at once with the aid of his jack-knife, and presently had two serviceable bandages ready to apply.

"Doctor Joe were sayin' how to keep the air away from burns by usin' oil or molasses or flour or somethin'," he hesitated. "And he were sayin' to keep sores from gettin' dirt into un *what*ever.

He says the sores'll be gettin' inflicted or infested or somethin',—I'm not rememberin' just what 'twere, but somethin' bad *what*ever—if they gets dirt into un. I've been wearin' the shirt three days, and I'm thinkin' 'tis not as clean as Doctor Joe wants the bindin' for sores to be, and I'll cover the sore place where the blisters were rubbin' off with fir sap. That'll keep un clean. Pop says 'tis fine for sores."

Crawling out of his nest Jamie found a young balsam fir tree, and with his sharp jack-knife cut from the bark several of the little sacs in which sap is secreted. He had often seen Thomas cut them and daub the contents upon cuts and bruises, and sometimes even have him and the other boys take the sap as medicine. Returning to the lean-to he pierced the ends of the sacs with the point of his knife, and carefully smeared the contents over his burned wrist where the skin was broken, taking care that all of the exposed flesh was well covered with the sap. Jamie had, indeed, fallen upon the best antiseptic dressing that the surrounding woods supplied.

This done to his satisfaction, he bound his wrists with the improvised bandages, applying them carefully, after the manner in which Doctor Joe had taught him in his lessons in first aid.

"'Tain't so bad," commented Jamie holding the wrists up and surveying them with satisfaction. "They feels a wonderful lot easier, *what*ever. But

I'd never been knowin' how if 'tweren't for Doctor Joe showin' me."

Jamie stretched himself upon the bed of boughs, and for a time lay watching the fire and thickly falling snow and listening to the wind shrieking and howling through the tree tops. Several times he fancied he heard the report of distant rifle shots, and at these times he would start up and listen intently and look cautiously out, half expecting and fearful that he would see the two lumbermen coming to recapture him.

But no one came to disturb him, and he assured himself at length that he had heard only the cracking of dead branches in the storm, and that there had been no rifle shots. Then, at last, his eyes drooped and he slept.

Hours afterward Jamie awoke. He was shivering with the cold. The fire had burned out, save the backlog which still glowed. It was night. The storm had passed and the wind dropped to fitful blasts. The stars were shining brightly, and the sky was clear save for feathery, fast moving cloud patches.

Jamie rebuilt the fire, and lay down to await morning. He was so hungry that he could scarce lie still, but again his eyes drooped and again he slept.

It was near daybreak when Jamie was startled by some unusual noise, and sat up with a jerk. He listened intently, and satisfied that some one was

approaching sprang up and looked cautiously out, seized with panic and ready for flight. In the dim starlight he could plainly see two men coming toward him over the marsh.

XIX

SEARCHING THE WHITE WILDERNESS

NEARLY three hours passed before Doctor Joe and David returned to camp, disheartened and thoroughly alarmed, to report that they had found no trace of Jamie. In the thick-falling snow and darkness they had been forced to relinquish the search until daylight should come to their assistance.

Andy and the boys were dazed. It could hardly be comprehended or credited that Jamie was, indeed, lost. They ate their belated supper in silence, half expecting that he would, after all, come walking in upon them. Doctor Joe was grave and preoccupied. Several times now he, now David, went out into the night to stand and listen in the storm, but all they heard was the wail of wind in the tree tops.

At last, with heavy hearts, they went to bed, upon Doctor Joe's advice. Andy asked that he might pass the night in the tent with Doctor Joe and David, and so it was arranged. Neither Andy nor David, more worried than they had ever been in all their lives before, felt the least like sleep. Doctor Joe did not lie down with them. For a

long while the two lads lay awake and watched him crouching before the stove smoking his pipe, his face grave and thoughtful. He had spoken no word of encouragement, and the lads knew that he was troubled beyond expression.

The wind was rising. In sudden gusts of anger it dashed the snow against the tent in swirling blasts, and moaned dismally through the tree tops. The crackling fire in the stove, usually so cheerful, only served now to increase their sorrow. It offered warmth and comfort and protection from the night and cold and drifting snow, which Jamie, if he had not perished, was denied. They could only think of him as wandering and suffering in the cold and darkness, hungry and miserable, and they condemned themselves.

When sleep finally carried the lads into unconsciousness, Doctor Joe's tall figure was still crouching before the stove, and when they awoke he was already up and had kindled a fresh fire in the stove, though it was not yet day, and the tent was lighted by the flickering flame of a candle.

"'Twill be daylight by the time we've finished breakfast," said Doctor Joe as the lads sat up. "It's snowing harder than ever, but I think we had better go out as soon as we can see and have a look up the brook. Jamie may not be so far away. We may find him bivouacked quite close to camp. The snow is getting deep and we shall not find travelling easy."

"We'll be lookin' the best we can, whatever," agreed David. "I couldn't bide in the tent with Jamie gone. I'm wakin' with a wonderful heavy heart. I'm findin' it hard to believe he's not about camp, and I weren't just dreamin' about he bein' lost."

"That's the way I feels too," said Andy. "I wakes feelin' most like I'd have to cry. Can't I be goin' with you and Davy? I never can bide here whilst you're away, Doctor Joe."

"Yes, we three will go and we'll take some of the other lads with us, though we'll have to leave somebody in camp to keep the fire going," agreed Doctor Joe. "We'll need warm tents when we come back, if we bring Jamie with us, and I hope we'll find him none the worse for his night out."

"'Tisn't like 'twere winter," suggested David hopefully. "'Tisn't so cold, if he were havin' matches to put on a fire, but I'm doubtin' he has matches."

"Let us hope he had. Andy, suppose you call the others," suggested Doctor Joe. "Breakfast is nearly ready."

Andy was already dressed, and hurrying out he presently returned with the other lads. Breakfast of venison and bread with hot tea was hurriedly eaten, while they put forth all sorts of theories as to the cause of Jamie's disappearance, and the possibilities of finding him.

"I'm thinkin' now," said David with a more

hopeful view as daylight began to filter through the tent, "that Jamie'll be knowin' how to fix a shelter, and that we'll be findin' he safe and that he'll be just losin' his way a bit in the storm. If he has matches he'll sure be puttin' a fire on."

"I'm doubtin' he has the matches," suggested Andy discouragingly. "He weren't thinkin' to be away from camp and he weren't takin' any. He were never on the trails, and he'd sure be forgettin' to take un."

"Let us hope he has them," Doctor Joe encouraged. "If he has matches I'm sure he'll be safe enough."

"'Twere my fault he were gettin' lost," said Seth. "He'd never been gettin' lost if I'd only kept he in sight the way you said to do."

"No," objected Doctor Joe, "we'll not say it was anybody's fault."

Presently they were ready. Seth and Micah were detailed to remain in camp, and the others set forth, David and Doctor Joe carrying their rifles.

In much the same manner as that adopted in the search for the rock the previous day, Doctor Joe and the boys spread out on the left, or westward, side of the brook. Now, however, they were much closer together, because they could see so short a distance through the snow. Walking was much harder, and their progress correspondingly slower.

Thus they continued to the farthest point reached before turning back the previous day, David or Doctor Joe now and again firing shots from their rifles. Then they turned back, making the return just to the westward of the trail made by Doctor Joe, who was on the left flank as they passed up the brook.

"There's a rock! There's a big rock!" shouted David, as the rock where Jamie had begun his search for the cache loomed high through the snow.

Every one ran to the rock, and as they gathered by its side, Andy exclaimed:

"I knows now what Jamie does! He were near enough to see the rock! He were the last one beyond Seth, and he finds un and he goes huntin' the cache by himself, and it gets dark and he gets lost when the snow comes!"

"That sounds reasonable," admitted Doctor Joe. "I shouldn't be the least surprised if you were right! It's more than probable that's just what happened! The thing now is to find the direction Jamie probably took from here, and the snow has covered all trace of him."

"With his trail all covered, there'll be no trackin' he. What'll we do about un?" asked David. "'Tis hard to think out what way Jamie'd be like to go from here."

"Let's try goin' the way the paper said the cache was," suggested Andy. "Maybe Jamie finds

un in the tree and climbs the tree and falls and hurts himself."

"Andy is right," agreed Doctor Joe. "It is quite likely he used his copy of the directions to find the cache, and that he went in the direction specified. We'll do the same."

It did not take them long to find the hackmatack tree, and in doing so they stumbled upon the pile of rocks Jamie had built up for a compass rest. It was covered with snow, but was high enough to be discernible, and a careful clearing of the snow discovered the fact that the stones had been recently piled.

"They may have been piled by the man who made the cache," suggested Doctor Joe.

"He'd never been doin' that!" objected David. "'Twould make the tree too easy to find. I'm thinkin' 'twere Jamie piles un."

"What would Jamie be pilin' the stones for now?" asked Lige sceptically. "He'd not be takin' time to go pilin' up stones that way."

"He piles un to pilot us and we comes huntin' he," suggested David.

They took the next direction, and in due time discovered the round rock, the top of which they likewise cleared of snow that they might make quite certain it was the rock for which they were searching. Then, in due time, Jamie's second pile of rocks and finally the birch tree were located.

At the birch tree all clues were lost. Vainly they

circled the surrounding country, firing rifles occasionally until they came to the edge of the marsh.

"We'd never be findin' he on the mesh, if he gets out there," suggested David.

"No," agreed Doctor Joe, "and there's no reason to suppose that he crossed it to the other side."

"That's what I thinks," said David. "He's somewheres this side of the mesh. He'd never cross un. He'd be knowin' there's no mesh between here and camp."

"He'd know 'twere not the way to camp," declared Andy. "Jamie'd never be forgettin' that he crosses no mesh comin' from camp however turned about he is. He'd never be so turned about as that."

"We'll search all the country, then, between this marsh and the brook," suggested Doctor Joe.

They could not know that Jamie, on the opposite side of the marsh, was at that moment in a snug shelter, and had been listening to their rifle shots, and supposing them to be the breaking of dead branches in the wind. Jamie was too small and too inexperienced to face and weather the storm on the marsh, unassisted, but Doctor Joe or David or even Andy might have crossed it. How often it happens that an obstacle that might be surmounted turns us back at the very door of success!

Wearily they trailed back through the woods, and up and down until darkness finally forced

them to return to camp unsuccessful and heavy hearted. The younger lads were almost too weary to drag their feet behind them. They had eaten nothing since their early breakfast, but Seth and Micah, anxiously watching and hoping, had a hot supper of fried venison and bread and tea ready, and as soon as they had finished their meal, Doctor Joe directed that they go to bed and rest.

Long before daybreak Doctor Joe was stirring. He lighted the fire, and when the kettle boiled roused David. Breakfast was ready when Andy awoke.

"Is you startin' so early?" he asked rubbing his eyes. "'Tis wonderful early. We can't see to travel till light with snow fallin'."

"Clear and fine outside!" said Doctor Joe. "I'm not satisfied that Jamie didn't cross the marsh. It's likely to be a long hard tramp, and David and I are going alone this morning, because we can travel faster. If we don't find Jamie by noon we'll come back after you and the other lads. You'll be fresh and rested then for the afternoon's search. We can't give it up till we find Jamie."

"I'd be keepin' up with you," protested Andy.

"If you go we'll have to take some of the others," objected Doctor Joe. "The snow is deep and they'll not be able to travel as fast as we shall. Let us go alone and if we need you we'll come for you."

And so it was arranged.

Presently David and Doctor Joe set forth in the frosty starlit morning. They turned their steps toward the marsh, and were near its eastern border when David stopped and sniffed the air.

"I smell smoke!" he exclaimed eagerly.

"Are you sure?" asked Doctor Joe, also sniffing. "I don't smell it."

"There's a smell o' smoke!" insisted David. "The wind's from the west'ard, and the smoke comes from over the mesh. There's a fire somewheres over there."

"Your nose is keener than mine," said Doctor Joe hopefully. "Go ahead, Davy. We'll see if you really smell smoke."

David led the way out upon the marsh, and they had gone but a short distance when Doctor Joe was quite sure that he, also, smelled smoke. David hurried on with Doctor Joe at his heels.

"There's somebody movin'!" exclaimed David presently. "See un? See un? 'Tis sure Jamie!"

Then he ran and Doctor Joe ran, and thus they came upon the frightened Jamie, standing uncertainly before his lean-to.

XX

"WOLVES!" YELLED ANDY

"JAMIE! Jamie! We've been lookin' and lookin' for you!" shouted David, quite overcome with excitement and relief.

"I'm so glad 'tis you!" exclaimed Jamie, tears springing to his eyes as he recognized Doctor Joe and David. "I was scared!"

"Safe and sound as ever you could be, and all of us thinking you were lost under a snow-drift!" Doctor Joe in vast good humour slapped Jamie on the shoulder. "You gritty little rascal! I'll never worry about you again! Here you are as able to take care of yourself as any man on The Labrador! Come on now back to camp and we'll hear all about your adventures when you've eaten. Are you hungry?"

"Wonderful hungry!" admitted Jamie.

"Aye, we'll be makin' haste, for Andy and the lads are sore worried," said David.

In single file, Doctor Joe and David tramping the trail for Jamie, they set out for camp. An hour later they crossed the brook, and with the first glimpse of the tents heard a shout of joy, as

Andy and the other lads discovered them and came running to meet them.

While Jamie satisfied an accumulated appetite he answered no end of questions. Every one was vastly excited as he related the story of his experience.

"'Tweren't Lem Horn's silver they has after all," Jamie declared. "There were nothin' in the cache but the bottles they drinks from, and they were thinkin' a wonderful lot o' them bottles."

David, in high indignation, was for setting out at once in search of the two lumbermen, but it was decided that they had doubtless already returned to the lumber camp.

"They'd probably say that they were only having sport with you, Jamie, and meant you no harm," said Doctor Joe. "The people over at their camp would believe them rather than a little Labrador lad. We may as well waste no time with them. We'll leave them alone, and be thankful that Jamie is safe and well except for the burned wrists, and they'll soon be cured."

"And we'll be havin' a fine time campin' here," agreed Jamie. "I wants to keep clear o' them men *what*ever."

It was a week later when they broke camp to return to The Jug, and when the visiting lads said good-bye and set sail to their homes across the Bay every one declared he had never had so good a time in all his life.

With the coming of November the boats were hauled out of the water. The shores were already crusted with ice and the temperature never rose to the thawing point even in the midday sun. The mighty Frost King had ascended his throne and was asserting his relentless power. Presently all the world would be kneeling at his feet.

Buckskin moccasins with heavy blanket duffle socks of wool took the place of sealskin boots. The dry snow would not again soften to wet them until spring. The adiky, with its fur-trimmed hood, took the place of the jacket, soon to be augmented by sealskin netseks or caribou skin kulutuks.

"The Bay's smokin'," David announced one evening as he came in after feeding the dogs. "She'll soon freeze now."

In the days that followed the smoke haze hung over the water until, one morning, the Bay was fast, and the lapping of the waves was not to be heard again for many months.

The nine sledge dogs were in fine fettle. Handsome, big fellows they were, but fearsome and treacherous enough. They looked like sleek, fat wolves, and they were, indeed, but domesticated wolves. Friendly they seemed, but they were ever ready to take advantage of the helpless and unwary, and their great white fangs were not above tearing their own master into shreds should he ever be so careless as to stumble and fall among them.

The sledge was taken out and overhauled by David. It was fourteen feet long and two and one-half feet wide. Twenty cross-bars formed the top. Not a nail was used in its construction, for nails would not hold an hour on rough ice. Everything was bound with sealskin thongs. The sledge shoes were of iron. These David polished bright with sand, and then applied a coating of seal oil. Finally the harness and long sealskin traces were examined, and all was ready.

It was the end of November when the Bay froze, but there was no certainty that travelling would be safe upon the sea ice beyond Fort Pelican before the beginning of January. Therefore Doctor Joe confined his visits to the Bay folk during December, and on his first tour Andy served as driver with Jamie as passenger.

The dogs were harnessed after the Eskimo fashion. That is to say, " fan shape," and not, as is customary in Alaska and among white men of the far northwest, in tandem.

Leading from the komatik (sledge) in front was a single thong of sealskin with a loop on its end. This was called the " bridle." Each dog had an individual trace, its end passed through the loop in the bridle and securely tied. Tinker, the leading dog, was fully thirty-five feet from the komatik when his trace was stretched to its full length. He had the longest trace of all. He was trained to respond to shouted directions, turning to the right

when "ouk" was called, or left for "rudder," the word being repeated several times by the driver in rapid succession. When it was desired that the dogs should stop "ah" was the order, and when they were to go forward "ooisht," or "oksuit." The other dogs followed Tinker like a pack of wolves follows the leader. The two dogs directly behind Tinker had traces of equal length, but somewhat shorter, the pair behind them still shorter, and so on to the last pair.

A long whip was used to keep them in subjection. This was of braided walrus hide an inch thick at its butt and tapering to a thin lash. To the butt was attached a short wooden handle a foot in length, to which was fastened a loop which was hooked over the protruding end of the forward cross-bar and the whip permitted to trail upon the ice when not in use, and at the same time it was always within the driver's reach.

The boys had practiced the manipulation of the whip all their lives. They could flick an inch square of ice at thirty feet with its tip. It was capable of a gentle tap, or the force of a pistol shot, at its wielder's discretion. The whip was the terror of the team, for even at his distance Tinker, the leader, could be brought to account if he failed to do his duty or obey commands.

There was little sickness in the Bay, and after patching up a lumberman at Grampus River, and providing some medicine for old Molly Budd's

rheumaticks, Andy and Jamie turned homeward with Doctor Joe.

Near the mouth of Grampus River there was a section of "bad ice," or ice that was not always safe to be crossed, the result doubtless of cross currents in the tide. To avoid this bad ice Andy followed the shore for a considerable distance before turning northward for the twelve-mile run directly across the Bay to The Jug.

It was a dull, cold, dreary day. The snow ground and squeaked under the sledge runners. Now and again a confusion of shore ridges rendered the hauling bad and the dogs lagged.

They were midway between Grampus River and the place where they were to make the turn northward when Jamie warned:

"Look out, Andy! The's some loose dogs comin' out of the woods! They'll be fightin' the team!"

Six big beasts, larger even than Thomas Angus's big dogs, were trotting out of the woods and upon the ice a hundred yards in advance. The team saw them, and with a howl rushed forward to the attack.

"Wolves!" yelled Andy. "They's wolves!"

The wolves were free. The dogs were bound by harness, and thus fettered were no match for the big, wild creatures. Andy's rifle was lashed upon the komatik. It was out of the question to free it in the moment before the wolves were upon them, and it was to be a hand-to-hand fight.

XXI

THE ALARM IN THE NIGHT

THE clash came instantly. The wolf pack was upon the dogs, and dogs and wolves were at once a howling, snarling, fighting mass. Great bared fangs gleamed and snapped. It was a fight to the death—a fight of the primordial for the survival of the fittest.

The attack was launched with such indescribable suddenness that Doctor Joe and Jamie had scarcely time to drop from the komatik before it was begun. Andy had instinctively seized his whip and began to play it with every opening that offered. The first strike caught a big wolf across the eyes, and with howls of pain it immediately endeavoured to extricate itself from the fight. The lash had cut its eyes out and it was blind.

With feverish haste Doctor Joe and Jamie undid the ax and rifle from the komatik, and Doctor Joe with the ax and Jamie with the rifle charged the fighting beasts. A lucky blow from the ax split a wolf's head. Jamie quickly found that to shoot at a distance he must take the risk of killing one of the dogs, but watching for an

opening, with the muzzle of the rifle within an inch of a big wolf's body, fired and another wolf was disposed of.

In the meantime Andy had been plying the whip with such precision that the foot of one of the wolves had been torn off and another wolf so badly lacerated that as it broke temporarily away Jamie dropped it with the rifle, and then shot the blind wolf which was now roaming aimlessly about. A stroke from Doctor Joe's ax dispatched the fifth animal, and the remaining wolf, now at the mercy of the dogs, was literally torn into shreds.

Hardly five minutes had elapsed from the moment Jamie discovered the pack trotting out of the woods until the fight was ended. The attack had been made with such suddenness and such savage fierceness that Doctor Joe and the boys had scarcely uttered a word.

Now there was the tangle of dogs to be straightened out, and Andy was compelled to use his whip to drive them from the dead wolves and quiet them. Hardly one of them had escaped injury from the wolf fangs, and Dick, a faithful old fellow, was so badly mangled that Andy cut him loose from the harness to follow the komatik home at his leisure.

"Dick's too much hurt to do any hauling for a month whatever," said Andy regretfully.

"He won't die, will he?" asked Jamie sympathetically.

IT WAS DR. JOE BEYOND A DOUBT!

"He'll get over un," Andy assured.

"The dogs had grit, now!" Jamie boasted. "The's nary a team in the Bay could have fought like *that!*"

"And I noticed you had some grit too," said Doctor Joe. "A wolf's fangs snapped within an inch of your leg, you young rascal, when you held the rifle against that fellow you shot."

"I weren't thinkin' of that," said Jamie.

One of the pelts was so badly torn by the dogs as to be valueless. The remaining carcasses were skinned, and the skins lashed upon the sledge, and as they turned homeward Andy remarked:

"They's five good skins and they'll bring four dollars apiece whatever. 'Tweren't a bad hunt when we weren't huntin'."

"You and Jamie can take the money you get for them and start a bank account," suggested Doctor Joe. "I'll send it to St. Johns and put it in a bank for you, and then you'll have that test completed for both the second and first class. There's no doubt you've earned it."

"Will you, sir? That's fine now!" exclaimed Andy. "Davy wasn't with us, and he'll have to set traps to earn his. But he'll get a marten or two, whatever."

"There's no fear of David's catching the martens," said Doctor Joe. "If there's a marten around he'll catch it."

It was dark when they reached The Jug. Mar-

garet and David were quite excited when they heard the story of the adventure, and mighty pleased with its ending.

"'Twere a stray pack," said David, "and they were hungry. Pop had a pack come at he that way once, but they just took one of the dogs and ran off."

A wonderful Christmas they had at The Jug that year. Doctor Joe had no end of surprises stowed away in mysterious boxes that he had brought from New York and deposited in his old cabin at Break Cove. He and David brought them over with the dogs on Christmas eve, and on Christmas morning they were opened.

The one disappointment of the day was the failure of Thomas to be with them. He had suggested at the time he departed for the Seal Lake trails in the autumn that he might come out of the wilderness for additional provisions at Christmas time, but it was a long and tedious journey and they knew it was one he would hardly undertake unless pressed by need.

Christmas holiday week was always one of celebration at the Hudson's Bay Company's Post. At this time trappers and Indians emerged from the silent wilderness to barter their early catch of furs and to purchase fresh supplies; and on the day before New Year's it was the custom of the men and women of the Bay to gather at the Post for the final festivities. All day long sledge load

after sledge load of jolly folk appeared to take part in the great New Year's eve dance, and to enter into the shooting contests and snow-shoe and other races on New Year's day.

Eli and Mark Horn drove their team in at The Jug just at dinner time on New Year's eve, and Eli invited Margaret to go on with them and visit Kate Hodge, the daughter of the Post servant.

"We'll be short of lasses at the dance, and we needs un all," said Eli.

"I'd like wonderful well to go," said Margaret wistfully.

"Go on," urged Doctor Joe. "You'll have a good time and the boys and I will make out famously here. You get away seldom enough and see too few people. 'Twill do you good, lass."

"Aye, come on now!" Eli urged. "We'll take you over snug and warm in our komatik box. Kate'll be wonderful glad to see you, and we'll bring you back the day after New Year."

"I'll go," Margaret consented, her eyes dancing with pleasure.

"And there'll be no prettier lass there," said Doctor Joe gallantly, which brought a blush to Margaret's cheek and caused Eli to chuckle.

Margaret hastened her toilet and was ready in a jiffy. She was all aflutter with excitement when Eli tucked her in a box rigged on the rear of the komatik, and wrapped her snugly with caribou skins.

"You must have had it in mind to capture Margaret when you left home, Eli," Doctor Joe suggested with a twinkle in his eye. "Men don't take travelling boxes when they go alone."

Eli grinned sheepishly as he broke the komatik loose, and the dogs dashed away.

It was a dull cold day with a leaden sky, and snow was shifting restlessly over the ice. The wind was in the southeast, and as they entered the cabin David remarked:

"They'll be snow before to-morrow marnin'."

When they had eaten supper that evening and cleared the table David stepped out for a look at the weather, and returning reported:

"'Twill be a nasty night. The snow's started and the wind's risin'. 'Tis wonderful frosty, too, for a wind."

"Let's see how cold it is," said Doctor Joe, stepping out to consult his spirit thermometer. "Thirty-eight below zero. Frosty enough with a gale, and a gale's rising," he reported. "I'm glad we're all snug inside."

"Tell us a story," Jamie suggested, as they settled themselves comfortably by the fire.

"They's dogs comin'!" Andy broke in.

David ran to the door, and a moment later ushered Eli Horn into the cabin.

"What's the matter, Eli? Has anything happened?" asked Doctor Joe, immediately concerned for Margaret's safety.

"Margaret's safe," said Eli with suppressed excitement. "The's murder at the Post!"

Questions brought forth the fact that Eli and Margaret had reached the Post at about half-past three and found the people in confusion. Three lumbermen from Grampus River had come there. There had been a dispute among them and one of them was stabbed. The other two had immediately departed, presumably to return to the lumber camps. Eli did not know how seriously the man was injured. He had not seen him. It had occurred shortly before his arrival, and at Margaret's suggestion he had turned directly about and returned to The Jug to fetch Doctor Joe to attend the injured man.

"My dogs is fagged," said Eli, "and 'twere slow comin' back."

"David will take me over with his dogs. They're fresh, and will travel faster," said Doctor Joe.

In ten minutes David was ready with the dogs harnessed, and the two teams drove away into the darkness and storm.

Andy and Jamie were greatly excited. Tragedies enough happened up and down the coast when men were drowned or lost in the ice or met with fatal injuries. But never before in the Bay had one man been cut down by the hand of another. It was a ghastly thought, and the awfulness of it was perhaps accentuated by the snow dashing

against the window panes and the wind shrieking around the gables of the cabin.

It was near ten o'clock, long past their usual bedtime, and they were still talking, for there was matter enough in their brains to banish sleep, when the door suddenly opened and accompanied by the howl of the wind a snow-covered figure lurched in upon them.

XXII

THE IMMUTABLE LAW OF GOD

"PETER! 'Tis Peter Sparks!" exclaimed Andy with vast relief to find it was not a murderous lumberman.

"I'm comin' after Doctor Joe!" gasped Peter, as half frozen he drew off his snow-caked netsek.

"Me rub your nose, Peter. She's froze, and your cheeks too," broke in Andy, vigorously rubbing Peter's whitened nose and cheeks.

Peter was silent perforce while Andy manipulated the frosted parts until circulation and colour were restored.

"Come to the fire now and warm up," directed Andy. "What you wantin' of Doctor Joe?"

"The's been murder done, or clost to un!" Peter, at last free to articulate, continued. "Murder at the lumber camp!"

"Murder!" repeated Jamie, awesomely.

"Aye, nigh to murder whatever!" Peter reiterated.

"Doctor Joe's gone to the Post," said Andy. "Eli Horn came for he. Two of the lumber folk most killed another of un over there. Davy took Doctor Joe over."

"And two of un most killed the boss at the camp," explained Peter. "They comes there from the Post about six o'clock and were packin' a flatsled with things. The boss asks un where they's goin'. They answers some way that makes he mad, and he hits one of un. Then they jumps at he and pounds and kicks he till he's like dead, and he don't come to again. The two men has rifles and they keeps all the lumbermen back, and off they goes with the flatsled, and they gets away."

"Will the boss die then?" asked Jamie in horror.

"With Doctor Joe gone he'll sure be dyin'," declared Peter desperately. "His arm is broke and he's broke somewhere inside, and his face is awful to look at, all pounded and kicked and bleedin'. Me and Lige goes up to sit a bit and hear un tell their stories, and we gets there just after the two men gets away. With Doctor Joe's teachin' we fixes the boss up the best we can, and whilst Lige stays to help look after he, I comes for Doctor Joe. Pop's to the Post with the dogs and I has to walk, and facin' the wind 'twere hard. And now Doctor Joe's gone, the poor man'll sure die!"

"You has wonderful grit to come!" said Jamie admiringly. "'Tis wonderful frosty and nasty outside."

"'Twere to save the boss's life! 'Tis the scout law," Peter asserted stoutly. "I'll be goin' to the Post now for Doctor Joe."

"You're nigh done up, Peter. You'll be stayin' here with Jamie. *I'm* goin' to the Post for Doctor Joe," declared Andy.

"I am most done up," Peter confessed. "But the wind'll be in your back goin' to the Post. She's just startin' though, and she'll be a wonderful sight worse than she is now before you gets there. 'Twill be terrible nasty."

"I'm goin' too," said Jamie.

"You're not goin'," said Andy. "I'm bigger and I can travel faster if you're not comin'. 'Twould be wrong to leave Peter here alone."

"I'm *goin'!*" repeated Jamie stubbornly.

"Won't you be stayin' with me?" plead Peter. "I—I'm afeard to stay here alone with those two men like to come in on me."

"I'll stay," Jamie consented.

A blast of wind shook the cabin.

"I'm fearin' you can't make un, Andy! 'Twill soon be too much for flesh and blood out on the Bay!" said Peter.

"'Tis in my scout oath to do my best," said Andy, adjusting the hood of his sealskin netsek. "I'm goin', now."

Andy closed the door behind him. It was pitchy dark. The snow was driving in blinding clouds, and he stood for a moment to catch his breath. Then he felt his way down across The Jug and out upon the Bay ice. Here the full force of the northeast blizzard met him. He staggered and choked

with the first blast, then in a temporary lull forged ahead.

The storm, as Peter predicted, had not reached its height. Each smothering blast of fury was stronger and fiercer than the one before it. Andy took advantage of the lulls, and save when the heavier blasts came and nearly swept him from his feet, maintained a steady trot. In the swirl of snow-clouds he could see nothing a foot from his nose. Once he found himself floundering through pressure ridges formed by the tide near shore. This he calculated was the tip of a long point jutting out into the Bay, half-way between The Jug and the Post. Ten miles of the distance was behind him. He drew farther out upon the ice.

There were times when Andy had to throw himself prone upon the ice with his face down and sheltered by his arms to escape suffocation.

"'Tis gettin' wonderful nasty," he said, "but I'll have plenty o' grit, like Jamie says, and with the Lard's help I'll pull through."

Then he found himself repeating over and over again the prayer:

"Dear Lard, help me through! 'Tis to save a life, and the scout oath! Dear Lard, help me through!"

The gale had now risen to such terrific proportions that often he was compelled to crawl upon his hands and knees. With each momentary lull he would rise and stagger forward. His legs

worked at these times without conscious effort. It was strange his legs should be like that. They had never felt like that before.

And so, crawling, staggering upright, crawling again, and lying for minutes at a time with his face in his arms that he might breathe when he was well-nigh overwhelmed and suffocated, Andy kept on.

He could recall little of the last hours on the ice. It was a confused sensation of rising and falling, staggering and crawling until he collided with an obstruction, and recognizing it as the jetty at the Post, his brain roused to a degree of consciousness, and his heart leaped with joy.

With much fumbling he succeeded in donning his snow-shoes, which were slung upon his back, for the twenty yards that lay between the ice and the buildings was covered with deep drift. Once he stepped upon a dog that lay huddled and sleeping under the drift. It sprang out with a snarl and snapped at his legs. A hundred of the savage creatures were lying about in the snow.

Day comes late in Labrador. It was still pitchy dark outside when Andy, at eight o'clock in the morning, lurched into the kitchen at the Post house, and fell sprawling upon the floor. He had been battling the storm for ten hours.

David and Margaret, Eli and Mark and several others were there. Doctor Joe was at breakfast in the Factor's quarters, and they called him. Andy's

face was covered with a mass of caked snow and ice. His nose and cheeks and chin were white and badly frosted, and upon removing his mittens and moccasins, his hands and feet were found to be in the same condition.

Mr. MacCreary, the factor, placed a bed at Doctor Joe's disposal, and when the frost had been removed and circulation had been restored, Andy was tucked into warm blankets.

"That chap had grit," remarked Mr. MacCreary as he and Doctor Joe left David and Margaret by the bedside and Andy asleep. "The Angus boys are all gritty fellows. They're the sort the Company needs."

"Yes," Doctor Joe agreed heartily, "and they never shirk their duty. Andy is a boy scout, and he did what he considered his duty. Now I must go to the lumber camp and fix up that boss, if he isn't beyond fixing up."

With the coming of dawn the wind subsided and the snow ceased to fall. Eli harnessed his dogs when it was light, and with the lumberman who had been stabbed, but whose injuries were not after all serious, he and Doctor Joe set out for Grampus River.

At the lumber camp they found Lige Sparks, Obadiah Button and Micah Dunk installed as volunteer nurses. The man had a broken arm, three broken ribs, and had suffered internal injuries that demanded prompt attention.

"If Andy hadn't come for me, and if I'd been delayed much longer in reaching the camp," said Doctor Joe later, "the man would have died. Thanks to the boys, his life will be saved."

That day and that night Doctor Joe remained with his patient. On the following morning it became necessary for him to return to The Jug for additional dressings and medicines. Eli drove him over.

The sky was clear, and the morning was bitterly cold, with rime hanging like a filmy veil in the air and glistening like flakes of silver in the sunshine. Doctor Joe and Eli ran in turns by the side of the komatik, while the dogs trotted briskly.

"What's that, now?" asked Eli, pointing to a black object far out on the white field of ice, as they approached The Jug.

"I can't make out," said Doctor Joe after a long scrutiny.

"We'll see," and Eli turned the dogs toward the object.

"It looks like a flatsled," said Doctor Joe as they approached.

"'Tis a flatsled," said Eli. "'Tis the men ran away from the lumber camp."

A gruesome sight met them as Eli brought the dogs to a stop. Huddled close and lying by the side of the toboggan, partially covered by drift, were the stiff-frozen bodies of two men.

"They were lost in the storm," said Eli pres-

ently. "They must have been wanderin' about till the frost got the best of un."

Doctor Joe and Eli lifted the remains to the komatik, and attached the toboggan to trail behind, and with their ghastly burden turned in at The Jug.

Jamie and Peter, vastly concerned for Andy's safety, met them, and were as vastly relieved when they learned that Andy would be not much the worse for his experience, and that the lumber boss would live.

The two bodies were carried into the woodshed and laid side by side upon the floor, to remain there until evening, when Doctor Joe and Eli would return them to Grampus River for burial. It was then that Jamie looked for the first time upon the upturned dead faces, and as he did so he exclaimed, with horror:

"They's the men! They's the men that had the cache and tied me up!"

"They've been hard men in life and probably done much evil in their day, but they're past it now and we'll treat their remains gently and humanly," said Doctor Joe as he covered their faces with a cloth.

Then they undid the flatsled and carried the contents into the cabin, where the things would be safe from the dogs. There were provisions, a bag of clothing, two thirty-eight calibre rifles, a quantity of ammunition and a small bag, which Jamie de-

clared was the bag which had been cached in the tree.

"I'm goin' to look at un," said Eli. "'Twill do no harm."

Eli undid the bag and drew forth a package which proved to contain a large roll of bills, amounting to several hundred dollars. Then followed two marten pelts, a red fox pelt, and the pelt of a beautiful silver fox. Eli shook the silver fox pelt, and holding it up examined it critically.

"'Tis Pop's silver!" he exclaimed.

"Are you sure?" asked Doctor Joe.

"'Tis Pop's silver! I'd know un anywheres!" declared Eli positively.

"Then," said Doctor Joe, "it was not Indian Jake but these men who shot your father and stole the fur."

"And stole our boat!" Jamie broke in excitedly.

"'Twere they stole the silver," Eli admitted, "and the Lard punished un. I'm wonderful glad my bullet went abroad and didn't hurt Indian Jake."

"We all thought Indian Jake guilty," said Doctor Joe. "How easy it is to pass judgment on people, and how often we misjudge them."

"And knowin' he didn't take un, and after I'd tried to kill he," went on Eli contritely, "he were wonderful good to me havin' me bide to supper and givin' me deer's meat."

"I'm rememberin'," broke in Jamie, "that the

men were talkin' o' somethin' they were takin' from the ship, and fearin' the lumber boss would find out about un. 'Twere the money they means."

There was a howl of arriving dogs outside, and Jamie rushed to the door to meet David and Andy and Margaret, and, to his unbounded delight, Thomas and Indian Jake.

While Thomas was being overwhelmed by Jamie, Indian Jake with a broad grin extended his hand to Eli.

"How do, Eli?"

"How do, Jake?" Eli took Indian Jake's hand. "I got the silver back, Jake, and you never took un. I'm wonderful sorry the way I done."

"I've got your ca'tredges here, Eli," grinned Indian Jake. "You can have un back now."

"But didn't Andy have grit, now!" Jamie's voice rose above the babel. "Didn't he have grit to go out in the night when 'twas *that* nasty! And a stout heart, too, like a man! Andy's a wonderful fine scout, *what*ever!"

And so ended the mystery of the shooting and the robbery of Lem Horn, and so the guilty were discovered and punished, as in some manner and at some time all wrong-doers are discovered and punished. It is the immutable law of God.

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